

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Discourses on women in the Polish parliamentary debates : dominance and resistance in critical and feminist linguistic perspective

Thesis

How to cite:

Renc-Roe, Joanna (2003). Discourses on women in the Polish parliamentary debates : dominance and resistance in critical and feminist linguistic perspective. MPhil thesis The Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2003 Joanna Renc-Roe



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000f564>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

Open University, United Kingdom
Central European University, Budapest

Joanna Renc-Roe
MA in English Philology

**Discourses on Women in the Polish Parliamentary Debates:
Dominance and Resistance in Critical and Feminist
Linguistic Perspective**

*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for a Master of Philosophy degree in
Gender Studies/ Linguistics*

Director of Studies: Dr. Erzebet Barat
Department of Gender Studies, Central European University,
Budapest, Hungary

Second Supervisor: Dr. Sally Johnson
Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language,
University of Lancaster, UK

Submitted: Budapest, July 2003

Submission date: 28 July 2003
Award date: 5 December 2003

ProQuest Number:27532738

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 27532738

Published by ProQuest LLC (2019). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Dr. Erzsébet Barát from CEU and University of Szeged for taking up the difficult job of my Director of Studies, starting from the beginning of this academic research project, in 2000, and for her intellectual involvement as well as her critical comments on each of the chapter drafts, and numerous meetings over the course of the following two years. I am equally grateful to Dr. Sally Johnson from Lancaster University's LAMEL department for being a very patient and helpful second supervisor, for her academic support and a positive attitude to my work, both in our email communication and during my visit to Lancaster. The patience and persistence of both of my supervisors in supporting me long after the substantial work on this thesis was finished (in January 2002) were invaluable.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my husband, Dr. Paul Roe, for being my main emotional support in this academic project, even at the most difficult of times. I would also like to thank him for helping with the proofreading of this thesis and, most of all, for his attentive listening and his calm belief in me. My Budapest/ CEU friends were an important support as well. Going back even further, I would like to thank my mother, Wanda Larczyńska, for her love and years of hard work, which made my academic years possible.

Abstract

This thesis constitutes a study of the dominant and resisting discourses on women in the Polish parliamentary debates using the combined perspectives of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and feminist linguistics. It provides a study of the discourses on women understood as dynamic ideological constructions of gender in the political language. The analysis is aimed at highlighting issues of hegemonic power relations as well as possible resistance mechanisms in discourse using the dialectical understanding of discourse as social practice and its representation .

The understanding of discourse as a text is utilised in order to pinpoint some of the ideological investments of the main discourses on women in two Polish parliamentary debates concerned with gender issues. The CDA is utilised to carry out this analysis. The concepts of categorisation, frames and repertoires are selected to highlight the constructions of the two main discourses on women represented in the debates. This methodological approach provides means to explore the hegemonic power to define women as well as the power to resist the dominant constructions of femininity in the 'texturing' of the debates.

The second theoretical and methodological approach utilised for the study of another parliamentary debate on women's issues is the feminist linguistic concept of the silencing mechanisms in interaction. This understanding of mechanisms of domination and resistance is applied to the study of one parliamentary debate conceived as a process and an interactive event. Using this perspective, I point out how domination of particular discourses/positions is achieved in the concrete discursive situation. This allows me to highlight another dimension of the power in discourse used to maintain or resist the dominant constructions of gender.

Contents:

List of Tables:.....	6
INTRODUCTION.....	7
CHAPTER 1.....	17
From women's language to a discourse on women: power and ideology in linguistic paradigms of language and gender.....	17
1.1 Woman's language as an ideological construct.....	18
1.2 Power relations according to explanatory models of feminist linguistic research.....	25
1.3 Power and ideology in the deconstructive approach.....	30
1.4 Dominance in performance as an approach to language and gender?.....	36
CHAPTER 2.....	44
Opening up new conceptualisations of discourse and power: critical and feminist discourse theory.....	44
2.1 Discourse as social interaction.....	45
2.2 Poststructuralist (Foucauldian) understanding of discursive power.....	47
2.3 Materialist feminist theory of power and discourse.....	51
2.4 Critical discourse theory.....	54
2.5 Feminist poststructuralist approaches to discourse, gender and power.....	58
2.6 Resistance through counter-discourse?.....	62
CHAPTER 3.....	68
From theoretical concepts to issues of methodology and the categories of analysis.....	68
3.1 Translating theoretical concepts into analytical tools.....	68
3.2 Introducing discourses on women in the Polish political sphere.....	69
3.3 The understanding of discourse.....	73
3.4 Epistemology: the positioning of the researcher.....	80
3.5 The methodological approach.....	83
3.6 The research questions.....	85
3.7 Power in discourse as a representation: Critical Discourse Analysis approach.....	88
CHAPTER 4.....	102
An analysis of discourse as a construct: categories, frames and repertoires forming discourses on women in Polish parliamentary debates.....	102
4.1 The analytical perspective.....	102
4.2 Introduction of the debates.....	103
4.3 The analysis.....	105
4.3.1 The equal status debates: 'equality as an international obligation' and 'women's rights as human rights'.....	105
4.3.2 The equal status debate: 'equality in difference': 'women's rights as natural rights'.....	116
4.3.3 The maternity leave debate: 'protected motherhood' versus 'protective discrimination'.....	131
4.4 Conclusion.....	149
CHAPTER 5.....	153
An analysis of discourse as a process: domination and resistance mechanisms in a Polish parliamentary debate on women.....	153
5.1 The analytical perspective.....	153
5.2 Contextual and interdiscursive background of the debate.....	155
5.2.1 Description of the selected data.....	156
5.3 The analysis.....	161
5.4 Summary: assessing the power struggle between discourses in the process of the debate.....	189
CONCLUSION.....	196

1. A review of the theoretical background and the aims of the thesis.....	196
2. A summary of the research on the power struggle in discourse	200
3. Strengths and limitations of the analysis	205
4. The materiality of discourse and the possible extension and application of the research.....	207
5. A postscript to the context of the analysed debates	210
References	211
Internet Sources	219
Appendix	220
Full transcript of the parliamentary debate analysed in Chapter 5.....	220

List of Tables:

Table 1 The equal status debate, position 1	115
Table 2 The equal status debate, position 2	130
Table 3 The maternity leave debate, position 1	140
Table 4 The maternity leave debate, position 2	148

INTRODUCTION

The problematic of language and power is fundamentally a question of democracy. Those affected need to take it on board as a political issue, as feminists have around language and gender (...) ¹

This thesis aims to provide an insight into the ideological contents and functioning of the category 'woman' in the Polish political discourse using linguistic theoretical and methodological approaches. The power relations implied or enacted in the political struggles over gender are considered of paramount importance for this study and they are examined through a detailed linguistic analysis. Furthermore, the feminist critique of gender relations in society, particularly in my own Polish society, remains the general aim of this research. In this domain, I build on some of the existing explorations of the symbolic representation of Polish women.² But in order to do

¹ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), 221.

² See especially, Anna Reading, *Polish Women, Solidarity and Feminism* (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1992) and also, Monika Platek, 'Dziewice, kury domowe i dziwki. O sytuacji kobiet w Polsce', (Virgins, Housewives and Whores. About the Situation of Women in Poland), in Jolanta Szymczak (ed.) *Kobiety o Kobietach* (Warszawa: Women and Economics Global Working Group, 1995), Monika Baer, 'Kategoria "kobiety" we współczesnych dyskursach publicznych. Przyczynek do dyskusji.' (The Category "Woman" in Contemporary Public Discourses. A Point for Discussion) in Elżbieta Pakszys and Włodzimierz Heller (eds) *Publiczna Przestrzeń Kobiet. Obrazy Dawne i Nowe* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe im. Adama Mickiewicza) and Joanna Bator, *Wizerunek kobiety w*

this, I follow both critical linguistic and feminist linguistic interest in language, gender, and power.³

The connection made by Norman Fairclough above between language and gender and language and power research is a summary of where I situate my research interest: the interplay between politics and gender relations in discourse. Similarly, the notion of democracy invoked above brings forth the realisation that what is at stake here is not only social critique but also possible social transformation or social change generated out of the resistance to power. This point is also made clearly by Coupland and Jaworski: 'A critical orientation is not merely 'deconstructive'; it may aim to be 'reconstructive', reconstructing social arrangements.'⁴ In the same vein, feminist linguists have been insistent on changing the direction of research from the study of gender inequality only, to the study of the women's strategies in *reclaiming* language.⁵ Though this research interest is usually applied to language use, (the counteracting of sexism in language) I will try to point out to how women resist the domination in political language. Still, my own feeling is that a study aimed at *de-*

polskiej debacie publicznej: perspektywa feministyczna (The Image of a Woman in the Polish Public Debate: a Feminist Perspective) (Warsaw: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, 1999)

³ For a brief introduction into the contemporary feminist approaches in linguistics, see for example, Margaret Gibbon, *Feminist Perspectives on Language* (London and New York: Longman, 1999), 1-10.

⁴ Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski, 'Discourse' in Paul Copley (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics and Linguistics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 147.

⁵ See, for example, Mary Talbot, *Language and Gender: an Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 218-225.

*silencing*⁶ women in a sexist environment (such as state politics) cannot be undertaken without the study of silencing itself.

This perspective involves the study of discourse, in both the understanding of the term as 'language-in-use and language-use relative to social, political and cultural formations, i.e. language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order, and shaping individuals' interaction with society'.⁷ In general, this understanding relies on the constructivist view of social reality.⁸ In relation to the meanings of language, this approach can be understood in Michael Halliday's conceptualisation: 'The option in the construction of linguistic forms – sentences, and the like – serve to realise options in meaning, which in turn realise options in behaviour that are interpretable in terms of social theory.'⁹

There are many reasons why this is a popular approach in social science in general, and in linguistics and language and gender in particular. But perhaps the most important is the acknowledgement of the increasing role that discourse (social semiosis) plays in the contemporary society, through the available institutions, media, the reliance on service industries and market economy, as well as through everyday interactions in all social contexts. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough point out:

⁶ See Mary Crawford, *On Gender and Language* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 1995), 176-177.

⁷ Coupland and Jaworski, 148.

⁸ Crawford, 17-18.

It is an important characteristic of the economic, social and cultural changes of late modernity that they exist as discourses as well as processes that are taking place outside discourse, and that the processes that are taking place outside discourse are substantively shaped by these discourses.¹⁰

These economic, cultural, political processes taking place outside of discourse are partly constituted through discourse or the discursive aspect of the social practices, which can be understood as 'habitualised ways, tied to particular times and places, in which people apply resources (material or symbolic) to act together in the world'.¹¹ In the contemporary society (or late modernity as Fairclough and Chouliaraki call it) many of the social practices are discursive, that is, carried out through language and other forms of social communication (or semiosis), for example through visual signs, such as in the media or advertising.

We can expect this discursive orientation to be reflected in the modern constructions of gender in general, including the gendered political categories. Here discourse is what creates the social reality in the sense in which we perceive it and understand it; discourse is also a decisive element in the way we interact in society and try to impact on social life. This theoretical basis of critical social theory in general, and critical linguistics in particular, is the background and the basis of my thesis. On the other hand, feminist scholars have shared this engagement in language, and my own

⁹ Michael Halliday, 'Language in a Social Perspective', in Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (eds) *Sociolinguistics: A Reader and a Coursework*, (London: MacMillan, 1997), 8.

¹⁰ Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 4

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

investigation starts from an interest in feminist linguistics. The more recent approaches to the study of language and gender have come to recognise the usefulness of a discursive approach to language on women. This is particularly true of feminist stylistics and feminist literary criticism but also of feminist linguistics.

Furthermore, the critique of a gendered aspect of the social life with its epistemological implications is needed to make critical social theory as critical and as reflexive as possible, without making it relativist. The feminist contribution to critical theory is in examining thoroughly the perspectives from which knowledge on women is produced, including the researcher's self-positioning in relation to the studied material, as well as the implications and limitations of research for women's agency. This self-reflexivity is particularly important for feminists researching various constructions of gender, because as Chris Weedon put it 'even if we resist a particular subject position we do so from the position of alternative social definition of femininity'.¹² In this respect, feminist linguistics is similar to how Weedon describes feminist literary criticism:

All meanings have implications for the existing social relations, contesting them, reaffirming them or leaving them intact. The meaning and the social and political implications of a reading will be determined by the position within the discursive field from which the critic reads and the knowledge inscribed in the discourses with which she reads (...) Every act of reading is a new production of meaning.¹³

This thesis constitutes an example of such a particular and partial reading of the gender constructions in the political discourse. As the reader, I am trying to engage self-reflexively with the gendered constructions of femininity for the purpose of going beyond the obvious and discovering some of the mechanisms in which both the exclusionary and the resistant discourses can be continuously constructed and reconstructed.

Yet, it has to be noted that this is not a post-modern approach. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough rightly point out, ‘although epistemic relativism must be accepted – that all the discourses are socially constructed relative to the social position people are in – this does not entail accepting judgmental relativism – that all discourses are equally good.’¹⁴

In this thesis, my particular interest lies in studying the constructions of femininity in the Polish political discourse using parliamentary debates as my data. My interest is in how women are being constructed in this form of discourse and whether predominant constructions may be challenged. This feminist perspective on political discourse arises out of an understanding that there is a very complex discursive relationship between the dominant state constructions of gender and women’s subject positions made available to them in everyday discourses and indeed in social reality. Interestingly, this relationship seems to be undergoing shifts and redirections

¹² Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*

¹³ (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997),

¹⁴ Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 8.

at a time of political transformation, as is the case in all East European and Post-Socialist states.¹⁵ However, the effects of such discursive shifts are particularly visible in Poland where the battles over women's reproduction that have become a prominent feature of the political life, since the reintroduction of the restrictive anti-abortion bill. As Gal and Kligman point out:

(...) any Polish politician's position on abortion is a limitus test of his opinions on diverse issues-such as church-state relations, health policy, and the national budget. This politicisation of abortion means that, at least since 1989, each change of president, parliament and government in Poland has brought a change in abortion laws, with very real consequences for the everyday lives of men and women.¹⁶

My aim is to investigate whether, how and to what extent, this discursive struggle has permeated other debates on gender issues. What have been the resulting perceptions of femininity constructed in these debates, which gendered constructions of the social, public and political life are being established through the political discourse? Finally, what can this investigation tell us about the mechanisms of power and resistance in discourse? This process of texturing the discourses on women demands further attention from a feminist perspective, particularly in relation to the possibilities for resistance to the imposed forms, and the possibilities for creating women's political agency out of such resistance. In this thesis, I will concentrate on how language is used to form the dominant discourses on women, and how such

¹⁵ See, especially Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender after Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 15.

discourses are maintained and opposed in the discursive battles over gender in politics.

Using this approach to the study of discourse, and also concentrating on power relations in discursive practice, I argue for the construction of discourses on women as an ideological practice. In the first chapter, I introduce this approach by discussing the development of the concept of 'women's language' and its criticism in feminist linguistic scholarship. This allows me to introduce the feminist linguistic approaches to the study of discourse and give an example of a particularly relevant theoretical and popular discourse on women.

This switch from 'discourse/language of women' to a more critical notion of discourse on women is then extended in the second chapter, in which I consider more thoroughly what a discursive approach to the study of gender means. That is, those theories that could be useful for conceptualising discourses on women are presented and discussed. I come to the conclusion that the most useful approach could come from adopting the theoretical insights into the nature of discourse offered by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and the feminist concern with the workings and effects of this discourse for women themselves. I consider whether these approaches go beyond a Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse and its workings in society. Furthermore, I am interested in what such conceptualisations can tell us about the resisting forms of power in relation to discourses on women.

¹⁶ Ibid., 34.

The third chapter represents a point of transition from these introductory and theoretical concerns with the notion of discourse to the issues of methodology and categories of analysis needed for analysing my material: the debates on women's issues in the Polish parliament. The aim of this chapter is to establish the adopted understanding of discourse and, following from this, to state my research questions and consider best ways of answering them. The double perspective of discourse as a moment of social practice and as a representation of that practice is established as central and methodological choices are made related to researching these aspects. The analytical tools chosen are a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis of the 'texturing' mechanisms with particular attention paid to the use of categories, frames, and repertoires. On the other hand, tools that are inevitable in a feminist linguistic research dealing with power in discourse, namely the mechanisms of domination and resistance in interaction are also pointed out and discussed. The material to be analysed is also introduced in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is part of the analytical application of the chosen perspective to the texts of the parliamentary debates. Two debates are analysed here: one concerning the proposal of equality legislation, and the other related to some changes in labour law, namely one concerning the extension of maternity leave. Categories, frames and repertoires are consistently used in these examples of argumentation to point to the ideological investments of the two main positions represented. The power to define

women by the political discourse is addressed here in relation to the textual elements of discourse.

The last Chapter is also an analytical one. This time it concerns the application of the feminist linguistic theorisation of domination and resistance to one parliamentary debate. The debate concerns the representation of women's issues at a United Nations special session on women by the Polish government delegation. Here, I concentrate on the interactive aspect of the debate, following its progress, and considering individual speakers' moves in order to show how the dominant positions are being established by particular speakers and how others are trying to resist these silencing mechanisms.

In the conclusion, I bring together my theoretical concerns and the answers to my research questions and consider them critically, trying to point out some of the strengths and limitations of the analysis.

CHAPTER 1

From women's language to a discourse on women: power and ideology in linguistic paradigms of language and gender

(...) studies of 'difference' are not just disinterested quests for truth, but in an unequal society inevitably have a political dimension.¹⁷

In this chapter I will trace the development of 'women's language' as a discourse on women from the non-linguistic through the various linguistic paradigms and assess their ideological investment and the implied or theorised conceptualisations of power relations in language. I will also try to point to the possible evaluation of the directions in which the most recent theory leads in its treatment of power and ideology. My primary aim is to explore the importance and the possibilities of conceptualising women's language as also an element of a discourse on women - as an ideological construct.

¹⁷ Deborah Cameron 'Introduction' in Jennifer Coates and Deborah Cameron (eds.) *Women in Their Speech Communities* (New York and London: Longman 1989), 5-6.

1.1 *Woman's language as an ideological construct*

The concept of women's language originates from non-scientific, everyday language, where it need not be a serious topic, but rather the subject of jokes and proverbs.¹⁸ Before an explanation of woman's language as an ideological construct is presented, we need to explore and evaluate the areas in which the term has been used. It is precisely the meanings with which woman's language has been inflected and its alleged 'nature' that may provide the first connection between language and ideology. The notion of ideology is multi-faceted and can be defined in a number of ways. However, to start my argument I will use a definition of ideology as a cultural construct that presents itself as a common worldview based on certain beliefs, but where 'the salience or prevalence of particular ideas are themselves a form of power'.¹⁹ Put differently, ideology is a view of the social order or its representation aiming at naturalising this order.²⁰ In other words, ideology may be seen as a worldview, a system of views which serves the purpose of justifying unequal power relations as well as maintaining the dominant definition of reality and excluding other understandings.

¹⁸ See, for example, Cheris Kramarae, 'Gender: How She Speaks' in Ellen Bouchard Ryan and Howard Giles (eds.) *Attitudes Towards Language Variation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), 87.

¹⁹ This working definition was developed on the basis of Susan U. Philips 'Language Ideologies in Institutions of Power. A Commentary' in Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathyryn A Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity (eds.) *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 213.

The primary and most readily available understanding of 'women's language' comes from lay theories of gender and language, or 'the common-sense beliefs', which have sometimes been named 'folklinguistics'.²¹ Stereotype is the key concept here, as it underlies this understanding of 'women's language'. Stereotypes may be understood as overgeneralisations and common-sense attributions that may or may not be false and negative, but which often are considered to be both.²² What really matters for my understanding of 'women's language' is that they do create a cultural reality against which individuals perceive themselves and others. Stereotypes are often treated as self-evident truths and are used for justifying a given position. It seems interesting that it is women's linguistic behaviour that gets stereotyped more often than men's. In any culture, there seems to be a rich repository of views on women's language, which is usually seen as peculiar, funny, or at least markedly different from the standard, male linguistic behaviour. They are found most notably in proverbs, anecdotes and other fixed phrases and they are the stock supply of meanings for jokes.²³ A fairly comprehensive list of stereotypes about woman's language is offered by Martin Montgomery:

Women, it is said, are less assertive (more tentative) in their speech than men: it is said that they use fewer taboo forms and more euphemisms than men, or conversely, that they talk

²⁰ This understanding of ideology is based on critical linguistics theory, which will be explored later. See, in particular, Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 87.

²¹ A discussion of folklinguistics in early linguistic work is offered by Mary M. Talbot, *Language and Gender: an Introduction* (Cambridge, Oxford and Malden, MA: Polity Press 1998), 37-38.

²² This understanding is offered by Deborah Cameron 'Introduction', Jennifer Coates and Deborah Cameron (eds.) *Women in Their Speech Communities* (London and New York: Longman 1989), 8.

less than men: that they are inclined to gossip, that they are more conservative in their speech and, at the same time, more sensitive to matters of correctness, that their speech is more polite and so on.²⁴

This is a good introduction into my understanding of woman's language as an ideological construct.²⁵ stereotypical views are not only negative and potentially insulting, they are also at the very core of the dominant construction of femininity. This construction is concerned, firstly with the preservation of binary difference between men and women, and secondly, with maintaining the derogatory meaning of this difference for women, establishing them as the subordinate group (characterised by non-standard linguistic behaviour).

The first linguistic, and therefore, scientific explanations of the concept 'woman's language' come from two areas of linguistic inquiry. The first is the work of the linguist, Robin Lakoff, who, in mid 70s became interested in the social phenomenon of gender. Lakoff²⁶ is credited with providing a first 'laundry list' of markers of feminine speech on all levels of linguistic production. Writing from the standpoint of mainstream linguistic theory, Lakoff used her own *native speaker intuition* to generalise the women's 'special style of speech':

²³ Examples of stereotypes related to female linguistic behaviour in English were quoted by Cheri Kramarae, 'Gender: How She Speaks' in Ellen Bouchard Ryan and Howard Giles (eds.) *Attitudes Towards Language Variation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), 87.

²⁴ Martin Montgomery *An Introduction to Language and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 151.

²⁵ The most insulting stereotypes state that women are talkative, gossiping, their speech is unending, verbose, indirect, illogical, lacking sense of humour, emotionally loaded and generally not to be taken seriously. See, Kramarae, 87.

²⁶ Robin Lakoff, *Language and Woman's Place* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975)

Woman's language shows up on all levels of the grammar of English. We find differences in the choice and frequency of lexical items: in the situations in which certain syntactic rules are performed; in intonational and other suprasegmental patterns.²⁷

According to Lakoff, these 'feminine markers' form a speech style characterised as soft, polite, non-confrontational and very insecure-sounding.²⁸ Interestingly enough, the characterisation of 'women's language' offered by Lakoff mirrors closely the views presented above as stereotypical. We may say that such a concept of 'woman's language' is an ideological construct. It is ideological in that it theorises the behaviour of women by using exclusionary ideological views on women. That is, women themselves are presented as lacking assertiveness and being hyper-correct and over-polite, where all the terms assess women's behaviour in relation to male patterns of speech.

Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall make the point that we should therefore treat Lakoff's findings as an inquiry into 'the cultural expectations' that is 'rooted in cultural ideologies' resulting from the socialisation process of girls²⁹. Such an understanding would correspond to the notion of woman's language as an ideological construct. Whether this was the case at the time is not clear, since Lakoff refers to the linguistic

²⁷ Robin Lakoff 'Extract from *Language and Woman's Place*' in Deborah Cameron (ed.) *Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1990), 221, 223.

²⁸ A shorter version of the argument appeared also in Robin Lakoff, 'Why Women are Ladies' in Charles Fillmore, George Lakoff and Robin Lakoff (eds.) *Berkeley Studies of Syntax and Semantics* vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 1-44.

reality in which women are not able to express themselves 'as well, as fully, or as freely as they might otherwise'.³⁰ This formulation implies the male speech style as the norm that is 'free' and 'full'.

Whatever the particular features of the so-called woman's language are found to be, the underlying assumption is that the linguistic behaviour of women is significantly different from that of men. Thus, women are a clear cut, stable category. In other terms, there are two linguistic sexes, constituted by a binary understanding of difference between them. This would explain why the text in question was so widely accepted as supposedly illuminating the reality of the miscommunication between men and women, and became extremely popular even as a basis for training male actors for female roles.³¹ Again, Bucholtz and Hall point to this as a positive feature of Lakoff's text, claiming that it 'parallels postmodern musings on the discursive construction of gender identity' as it allows for the enactment of the 'opposite' style.³² However, they fail to point out that in the popular imagination no such option is available unless to be used for the purpose of comic representation of the 'Other'.

The second area in the linguistic investigations where meanings related to 'women's language' are to be found is sociolinguistics, which, instead of introspection, uses

²⁹ Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, 'Introduction: Twenty Year's after *Language and Woman's Place*' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds.) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 6.

³⁰ Robin Lakoff 'Extract from *Language and Woman's Place*', 222.

³¹ Bucholtz and Hall, 5-8.

³² Bucholtz and Hall, 7.

ethnographic methodology. Most often quoted of these are William Labov's³³ and Peter Trudgill's³⁴ studies of sex and class variables in English-speaking communities. Both studies came to the conclusion that women used standard forms of pronunciation as opposed to the more vernacular forms preferred by males. Again, this mirrors the stereotypical representations of women's speech. The research starts from the assumption of the two sexes as given, stable and socially determined. The subsequent explanations for the differences in behaviour are simplistic, overgeneralising and often stereotypical. For instance, women are seen as more concerned with politeness, social prestige and the standard language as a way of counterbalancing their lack of other powers in the real world.³⁵ Thus, what these studies attempt to do is to provide scientific explanations of the existing status quo rather than critique it. This is a criticism of sociolinguistic approaches in general: though turning to the study of language in the social context, they do not try to problematise the social at all.³⁶ Most importantly, there is a definite bias in the treatment of male behaviour as the norm, and female behaviour as a departure from it, which is therefore in need of explanation.³⁷ For example, the material conditions of women's lives were not taken into account. Instead, their behaviour was explained by certain psychological characteristics allegedly typical for women. Features such

³³ William Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (Washington DC: Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1966)

³⁴ Peter Trudgill, 'Sex, covert prestige and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich.' in Jennifer Coates (ed.) *Language and Gender: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998)

³⁵ Talbot, 24.

³⁶ The argument was best summed up by Deborah Cameron, 'The language-gender interface: challenging co-optation,' in Victoria L. Bergvall, Janet M. Bing and Alice F. Freed (eds.) *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice* (London: Longman, 1996), 32-33.

as conservatism, hypercorrectness, insecurity, lack of social status all enter such blanket explanations.³⁸ Cameron also makes the point that there might be a hidden agenda behind this type of research concerned with making claims about female inferiority (or abnormal behaviour), which does no more than justify further male dominance.³⁹ For feminist scholars, explanation in this instance can lead to justification.⁴⁰

Thus, woman's language can be seen as an ideological construct also in the empirically oriented, scientific discourse of sociolinguistics. Moreover, it is precisely this belief in empiricism that makes the ideology possible. This belief contends that the reality of a given community needs only to be studied with the assumption that whatever exists is right and serves some socially important function. The idea that 'the reality' serves the purpose of maintaining unequal power relations, or the other way around, that it is these exclusionary power relations that create 'the reality' as we know it is not explored. That this is deemed unproblematic or unworthy of attention can only be claimed from within the dominant ideology of the more privileged, with their particular interests at stake.

³⁷ See, for instance, Deborah Cameron and Jennifer Coates 'Some problems in the sociolinguistic explanation of sex differences' in Jennifer Coates and Deborah Cameron (eds.) *Women in Their Speech Communities* (London: Longman 1989)

³⁸ Ibid., 14-23, and Sally Johnson, *Gender, Group Identity and Variation in the Berlin Vernacular: A Sociolinguistic Study* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995), 86-93.

³⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 35, 49.

1.2 *Power relations according to explanatory models of feminist linguistic research*

Gender and language research has generally aimed at explaining the relationship between women and language and, at the same time, has attempted to problematise the stereotypical representations of women's language. The key notion for any study of gender and language is the issue of power, and the available paradigms vary precisely in their theorisation of power in human communication. Another problem which we should try to address is whether and how the language and gender paradigms can be conceptualised in relation to their ideological investment, and, of course, in their assessment of the dominant ideology of 'woman's language'.

Feminist research on gender and language can be seen as grounded in the early theorisations. In this respect, both the work of Lakoff and the sociolinguistic studies have been credited with starting the research interest in the language of women and supplying the first available explanatory paradigm of language and gender, known as **the deficit paradigm**.⁴¹ As the name suggests, this approach stresses the shortcomings of women's style due to their different socialisation in early childhood. According to Lakoff, women are trained in both masculine and feminine styles, but whichever one they use they will be criticised as either losing their femininity and

⁴¹ Cameron, 'The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation', 39, Talbot, 30. Though it can also be conceptualised as a part of dominance model. See, for example Sally Johnson, 'Theorising Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective', in Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof (eds) *Language and Masculinity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 9.

becoming too masculine or simply for being too feminine, and thus not to be taken seriously.⁴²

However, the deficit model falls into the trap of accusing women themselves of doing something wrong even if it is seen as a direct consequence of the socialisation process: women, though forced to a passive 'bilingualism', cannot become fluent in either of the two styles.⁴³ This early interest in women's language has been accused of reinforcing the dominant, white, middle-class, American ideology on femininity, which may explain its 'acceptance by diverse groups of speakers as a valid representation of their own discursive experiences'.⁴⁴ Similar criticisms have been directed at early sociolinguistic explanations of female speech in relation to the 'male vernacular'. This view equated the use of conversational power with male, and the use of politeness with female speakers, while, at the same time, 'acknowledging' the ensuing ineffectiveness of women in interaction.

The second model, known as **the dominance paradigm** made male power in conversation, rather than female deficit, the centre of its attention. It points out how men dominate women even, or primarily, in everyday conversation. The research has shown that women are assigned the 'maintenance work' of conversation,⁴⁵ that they

⁴² Robin Lakoff 'Extract from *Language and Woman's Place*', 222.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Buholtz and Hall, 6.

⁴⁵ Pamela Fishman, 'Interaction: The Work Women Do' in Barrie Thorne, Cheris Kramarae and Nancy Henley (eds) *Language, Gender and Society* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1983)

are often interrupted, silenced⁴⁶ and evaluated negatively.⁴⁷ The majority of earlier feminist linguistic research in cross-sex conversation seemed to support this generalisation. However, this approach lost popularity in the nineties, primarily because it was seen as overgeneralising the power of men, particularly stark in Dale Spender's model of man-made language.⁴⁸ Cameron stated that this approach marked the moment of feminist outrage at the power of men, and thus male power was presented as too monolithic without due attention to the context of conversation in which this power was displayed.⁴⁹

What follows is Cameron's claim that in the 1990s we need to look for non-monolithic and more context-dependent understanding of power, where men are not inherently oppressive villains and women are not inevitably victims.⁵⁰ As Talbot points out 'such a monolithic perception of patriarchy is useless (...) If we are going to make claims about male dominance, we need to be more sophisticated'.⁵¹

Another important point is that the approach was seen as leading to uncomfortable confrontations with men, who 'are unlikely to be pleased with the way someone researching into male dominance in conversation interprets their findings'.⁵² This

⁴⁶ Don Zimmerman and Candance West, 'Sex Roles, Interruptions and Silences in Conversation' in Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (eds) *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House 1975)

⁴⁷ Victoria Leto De Francisco, 'The Sounds of Silence: How Men Silence Women in Marital Relations' *Discourse and Society* 2, no.4 (October 1991)

⁴⁸ Talbot, 131.

⁴⁹ Cameron, 'The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation,' 41.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵¹ Talbot, 134.

⁵² Talbot, 135.

problem may be seen as an existing conflict of private and professional values, which Talbot calls an ethical one. But this also shows that political values could have changed. As Cameron sums up, 'the feminist outrage' was no longer 'the mood' in the 1990s.⁵³

A parallel approach, though one which conceptualised the relations between men and women in interaction differently, became known as **the difference paradigm**. This approach again evoked the concept of bilingualism, claiming that men and women use different conversational styles, and have different goals in conversation which may lead to miscommunication. This is due to men and women living in two overlapping but different cultures, where socialisation in peer groups is seen as the source of different patterns.⁵⁴ Thus, men's conversational style aims at maintaining hierarchy and status, while women's aims at maintaining positive and interconnected relationships. Cameron calls this research interest 'a moment of feminist celebration, reclaiming and re-valuing women's distinctive cultural traditions'.⁵⁵ Understandably, the difference approach has led to more research into specifically female conversational styles.⁵⁶

⁵³ Cameron, 'Rethinking Language and Gender Studies: Issues for the 1990s', *Career* in Sara Mills (ed.) *Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York and London: Longman, 1995), 32.

⁵⁴ Talbot, 131.

⁵⁵ Cameron, 'The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation,' 41.

⁵⁶ See, for example Jennifer Coates, 'Gossip Revisited: Language in All Female Groups' in Jennifer Coates and Deborah Cameron (eds.) *Women in Their Speech Communities* (London and New York: Longman 1989), and Jennifer Coates 'Language, Gender and Career' in Sara Mills (ed.) *Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York and London: Longman, 1995)

However, the difference paradigm became heavily criticised when it was popularised by Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand*.⁵⁷ Whereas the dominance paradigm was seen as overstressing and simplifying issues of male power, the difference paradigm, in Tannen's version, was criticised for ignoring the issues of power altogether. This was seen as a reactionary stance, maintaining the status quo rather than challenging it and demanding change.⁵⁸ The notion that men and women live in or come from two different cultures was seen as problematic, while the assessment of the two styles as different but equally valuable was considered as not reflecting existing social relations. As Talbot puts it: 'socially the two styles are *not* equally valid'.⁵⁹

The conceptualisation of women's speech as distinct from men's (but somehow less useful in the public sphere where the masculine model reigns) contributed to maintaining the ideology on women, and the understanding of genders as binary opposites, where women occupy the less prestigious, more problematic end of the spectrum. This point was made clearly by Cameron who also showed how the difference model can be co-opted by non-scientific popular media in order to problematise women's behaviour, and to maintain ideological notions of femininity and masculinity.⁶⁰ Talbot also points to the political consequences of this approach: on the one hand 'there is no unpleasant politics to think about and no one is to blame,

⁵⁷ Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand* (London: Virago, 1991)

⁵⁸ See, especially Senta Troemel-Ploetz, 'Review Essay: Selling the Apolitical' *Discourse and Society* 2, no.4 (October 1991)

⁵⁹ Talbot, 142.

⁶⁰ Cameron 'The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation, 36-37

but also the approach 'could be used to support the traditional, conventional idealisation of womanhood'.⁶¹ According to Cameron, this is exactly the reason for the popularity of Tannen's book as well as its co-optation in advice literature for women. Not only are clear-cut ideas of femininity and accounts of gender difference reaffirmed, the advice becomes increasingly directed at women's behaviour, even in the private domain, and it is women who are responsible for achieving any change in their interactions with men.⁶² In this way, the ideological representation of women is reaffirmed, rather than challenged.

1.3 *Power and ideology in the deconstructive approach*

How can we avoid problematising women and using a monolithic concept of power, but still be able to study gender and language?⁶³ According to Cameron, the issue is to problematise the notion of gender itself so that it is seen as a 'problem, not a solution'.⁶⁴ What is considered inadequate is the conception of gender as a binary phenomenon arising from what men and women are socialised to do. In the words of Johnson, gender is better conceptualised as a *verb* rather than a *noun*: 'Masculinity and femininity are ongoing social processes dependent on systematic restatement, a process which is variously referred to as "performing gender" or "doing identity

⁶¹ Talbot, 139, 138.

⁶² Cameron 'The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation,' 36-39.

⁶³ Cameron, 'Rethinking Language and Gender Studies: Issues for the 1990s', 44.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 42.

work”’.⁶⁵ Judith Butler is credited with introducing this performative notion of gender. Cameron sums up Butler’s claim that ‘who you are, and are taken to be depends on your repeated performance over time of acts that constitute a particular identity’.⁶⁶ Butler reworks Austin’s⁶⁷ speech act theory to point to the creation of social realities and subjectivities through speech. In her more recent work⁶⁸ she claims that an act of signification is also an enactment of what it names: ‘The pronouncement is the act of speech at the same time that it is the speaking of an act’.⁶⁹ Moreover, the social practice of speech acts is ritualised as it ‘accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior or authoritative set of practices’.⁷⁰ This may be said also of the practice of performing gender identity through speech.

This conceptualisation is acknowledged to have arisen out of post-structuralist approaches to language,⁷¹ particularly out of the work of Michael Foucault.⁷² The deconstructive paradigm seeks to see gender as fluid and performative. In the words of Johnson, ‘language does not simply mirror gender; it helps constitute it - it is one of the means by which gender is enacted’.⁷³ Language is a means by which

⁶⁵ Sally Johnson, ‘Theorising Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective’, 23-22.

⁶⁶ Cameron, ‘The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation,’ 47.

⁶⁷ J.L Austin, *How to Do Things With Words?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

⁶⁸ Judith Buttlar, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997)

⁶⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁷¹ For example, Mills, 16, Talbot 145, Ruth Wodak, *Disorders of Discourse* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 24.

⁷² See, especially Michel Foucault, ‘The Discourse on Language’, in Richard Kerney and Mara Rainwater (eds) *The Continental Philosophy Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) and Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Travistock, 1972)

⁷³ Johnson, ‘Theorising Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective’ 23.

knowledge and identity are enacted in the process of engendering. The fluidity of social practices means that positions can shift and are subject to change, a point which is welcomed by feminists as allowing for potential change and making an emancipatory feminist agenda plausible.⁷⁴ This new dimension for studying language and gender could be called '**the dynamic paradigm**',⁷⁵ although it has also been referred to as '**performative**', or '**deconstructive**' approach.⁷⁶

In this view, not only does the language of gendered speakers amount to the performance of gender: if we take a post-structuralist view, the same can be said about any theorisations of gender itself (including the performative one). That is, we may say that all theories on language and gender are also constructions of gender (difference). This understanding of the connection between language of and language on women creates a more complex conceptualisation of gender and language.

Before we accept the new approach, we need to consider how it relates to the key issues of power and ideology in relation to gender. The prevailing view within language and gender theorists sees the deconstructive paradigm as the only answer to the problems with the dominance and difference paradigms.⁷⁷ As regards the issue of dominance, it allows for a more sophisticated, context-dependent study of power and resistance, where both men and women are involved in enacting, but also resisting

⁷⁴ A point made by Johnson, 'Theorising Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective', 24, Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene*, 209, Talbot, 145.

⁷⁵ Talbot, 145.

⁷⁶ Cameron, 'The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation', 48.

⁷⁷ For example, Cameron, 'Rethinking Language and Gender Studies: Issues for the 1990s', 39, 43, Talbot 144.

the standards of masculinity and femininity. Contrary to the binary understanding of gender difference in the difference paradigm, men and women are *not* clear-cut, pre-given categories at all, but are constantly being recreated as such. Thus, there is scope for numerous constructions of gender⁷⁸. This is a sophistication of earlier, simplistic notions of power and gender in discourse. According to Mills, in this Foucauldian understanding 'power is dispersed through social relations, (...) it produces possible forms of behaviour as well as restricting behaviour'⁷⁹.

However, this 'productive notion of power'⁸⁰ can be criticised by some feminists as restricting the possibility of a critique of patriarchal relations in society. For example, it has been pointed out that such a dispersed notion of power may only be possible from the position of the privileged, the one placed at the centre of power and therefore not useful for the marginalised groups.⁸¹ Indeed, it is hard for women and other marginalised groups who experience the negative effects of the prevalent power relations to accept the view that they are as implicated in the process of producing these power relations as those who control their private lives, their access to the public sphere, and so on.

⁷⁸ See Johnson, 'Theorising Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective', 19-21, for a discussion of different masculinities.

⁷⁹ Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 20.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸¹ See, for example, Nancy Harstock, 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?' in L.J. Nicholson (ed.) *From Feminism to Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990)

Another important consideration relates to the concept of ideology. Mills claims that it has become considered problematic, and thus it is often substituted by the notion of discourse, due to the political climate of 1990s:

Many theorists have found themselves more comfortable with the notion of discourse than aligning themselves with Marxist inflected theories through the term ideology' (...) it is possible to conduct a politically informed analysis based on the use of discourse theory, but this political commitment is in no way as straightforwardly formulated as it is when using the term ideology.⁸²

Though Mills is probably trying to say that there can no longer be easy generalisations of power and that is why discourse is a better term than ideology, this assessment relies on a particular understanding of ideology. Ideology is seen here as producing false consciousness and blinded subjects, whereas discourse is seen as a site of incessant contestation over meaning, allowing for resistance:

Discourse, because of its lack of alliance to a clear political agenda, offered a way of thinking about hegemony - people's compliance in their own oppression - without assuming that individuals are simply passive victims of systems of thought.⁸³

This can be understood to mean that making a social subject, institution or social group responsible for consequences of discursive practices is becoming more problematic. But it may also mean that it is no longer possible, thereby presenting a

⁸² Sara Mills, *Discourse*, 29.

threat to the feminist linguistic (and political) agenda; a point which is acknowledged by Mills herself:

An ideological analysis still, in the last instance, retains the notion of individual subject who is capable of resisting ideological pressures and controlling his or her actions. Discourse theory has far more difficulty in locating, describing and even accounting for individual subject who resists power.⁸⁴

Such developments within feminist scholarship in general have been critiqued by Hennessy,⁸⁵ who claims that we are witnessing an assimilation of the emancipatory discourses into the mainstream academic culture, but in the form of 'ludic' postmodernism'. This signifies a turn to the celebration of difference and of multiple identities, especially seen as constructed through language, but without any analysis of the ways in which these differences are socially, materially constructed out of unequal power relations.⁸⁶ At the same time, she claims that concentrating on issues of language play, of signification and the creation of difference, may lead to 'a watering down of feminism', as it becomes 'absorbed by the hegemonic culture'.⁸⁷

According to Hennessy, what feminist analysis needs to develop instead of 'ludic postmodernism', is a 'resistance postmodernism' which allows for a study of 'politics of the production and maintenance of subjectivities, that is, with language as

⁸³ Ibid., 42.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁸⁵ R. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1993)

⁸⁶ Ibid., 10-11.

a social practice'.⁸⁸ That is, ideology should not 'disappear' as a focus of analysis, but it should be seen as a more complex phenomenon, just like the concept of power has become. However, we need to consider further what would such a dynamic conceptualisation of ideological practices (rather than a stable ideology) mean also for language and gender study?

1.4 Dominance in performance as an approach to language and gender?

Apart from the notion of ideology and the fluid understanding of gender, the approach to power in language and gender must be carefully considered again. If we accept the notion that feminist scholarship should not lose its resistance and emancipatory aims, it seems that feminist linguistics cannot afford to give up some understanding of power-as-dominance, alongside a conceptualisation of difference. A similar point was made by Cameron in her discussion of difference, despite her discrediting of the 'dominance paradigm':

(...) Inequality can give rise to difference, rather than vice versa. The conventional view is to see subordinated groups as oppressed *because* they are different. I am suggesting rather that

⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.

many of the differences invoked to justify oppression, to the extent that they exist at all, have actually arisen historically because of it. In the case of these differences, there can be no place for relativism.⁸⁹

Thus, the new dynamic or deconstructive approach should not aim at celebrating multiple differences, as this would lead to a similar kind of relativism that the celebration of binary difference entails. Rather, it should reassert the notion of power and dominance, and thus rewrite the dominance paradigm. Otherwise, any feminist-informed research concerned with oppression and inequality, understood as asymmetrical relations in social interaction, will not be possible. As Johnson claims in relation to the study of masculine speech culture, we still need 'an informed study of mechanisms of oppression, that is, of the specific ways in which men construct a world which so manifestly excludes and undermines women'.⁹⁰ Clearly, a sophisticated notion of dominance resulting out of power inequalities must still be present in any such project.

The conceptualisation of gender within the deconstructive paradigm should be seen as both promising and problematic. Firstly, within the performative view of gender the notion of masculinity and femininity are no longer seen as binary categories, but rather as mutually constructed.⁹¹ Yet, though a dialectical one, this relation is highly asymmetrical. In other words, the two genders seen as mutually constructed need not

⁸⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁹ Cameron, 'Rethinking Language and Gender Studies: Issues for the 1990s', 41.

⁹⁰ Johnson, 'Theorising Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective' 13.

⁹¹ Ibid., 22.

be equivalential at all.⁹² More often than not, masculinity is located at the relatively more prestigious, powerful end of the scale played against the relatively powerless, unprestigious femininity. This is why there is more at stake for men to avoid being called “feminine” than the other way around, as witnessed in various models of semiosis, such as ways of dressing and the perceived style of speaking. A similar point was made by Cameron when, in discussing the problem of the relativism of the difference paradigm, she mentions the two sexes ‘complementing’ each other. She argues that ‘complementarity does not mean equality. On the contrary, gender relations are predicated on the subordination of one group over another’.⁹³ Subordination cannot be accounted for without turning to the notion of power and some understanding of how it is used systematically to subordinate, that is to dominate ‘the Other’ in a particular context.

Another point is that the dialectical relation between men and women is much more complex. The concept of the ‘generic man’ is allowed to mean more than the masculine as defined in relation to the feminine. Being the unmarked category the masculine is more readily taken to embody the typically human. Men are not always seen as men but as genderless, abstracted, typical human beings.⁹⁴ This notion of the genderless man is very much present in concrete social situations and institutions, just as much as in the structure of language or in scientific discourse. It is this

⁹² The notion of unequivalential mutual constructs, a dialectical relation understood as ‘differential internalisation’ was made by my director of studies, Erzsebet Barat in her notes to my chapter.

⁹³ Cameron, ‘The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation’, 43.

⁹⁴ A particularly good investigation of the concept of the generic man was carried out by Naomi Sheman, *Engenderings: Constructions of Knowledge, Authority and Privilege* (London: Routledge, 1993), 185-192.

apparent lack of gender, lack of complete embodiment, that has previously legitimised men as undisputed policy makers, judges, managers and so forth, and has given them the right to decide on even specifically 'feminine' matters, such as the reproductive rights of women.

Women, on the other hand, are primarily seen through their gender, if not still through their body reduced to biological sex. Even when women are allowed into positions of power they do not act as genderless beings; their actions are always caught up within gendered and sexualised categorisation of their body. This is why deciding on issues considered as 'traditionally' male is rarely an open option for women: a group of exclusively male politicians may debate reproduction rights and female contraception, but a commission of women debating such issues as military organisations, national security, and the like is still hard to imagine in most societies. In my understanding, any *asymmetrical* dialectical social construct cannot be explained without some notion of power, domination and ideology.

My point is not to return to a monolithic notion of power, one always exercised by the same people in the same way, as this is never the case. Perhaps, different forms of power permeate different social situations: in some localities power is more concentrated than in others and it need not be hegemonic power in all instances. Yet, Johnson stresses that 'flexibility, inconsistency and contradiction must not be seen as irritations which distract from feminist accounts of hegemonic male power'.⁹⁵ For

⁹⁵ Johnson, 21.

example, the dynamism and complexity of performing masculine gender need not distract us from 'the complex role played by 'difference' in the construction of 'dominance''.⁹⁶

If we accept that dominance is still a valid way to understand power relations in interaction, how can this dominance be conceptualised? Domination involves power, or the appropriation of power by a particular interlocutor. However it is also a strategy, a process, a mechanism, and not necessarily attributed *a priori* to some interlocutors or social groups. It is still the process of 'doing power', and, perhaps, it need not remain unchallenged.

It seems to me that post-structuralist feminist theory,⁹⁷ and some of the recent language and gender research, does combine the notion of performance with the notion of dominance in power relations. One example of how the dynamic and the dominance paradigm can be combined in feminist research on everyday interaction is Elinor Ochs and Carolyn Taylor's work on the dinner table conversations of couples.⁹⁸ In the study, husbands were shown to be routinely placed *by their wives* in the roles of evaluators, judges, and critics of the recounted behaviour of women (and children).⁹⁹ However, though the authors of this analysis speak of 'gender asymmetry' they operate within the 'deconstructive paradigm' and treat gender and

⁹⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁷ See, for example Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998)

⁹⁸ Elinor Ochs and Carolyn Taylor, "'The Father Knows Best" Dynamic in Dinnertime Narratives'.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 99.

power as enacted and recreated in the discursive creation of male and female identities. Thus, dominance is seen as a process, and one that is often created with the input of the women themselves, though the effects of it place women in a subordinated position.

Even more relevant for my research interest is a similar approach to communication in the public sphere. Dynamic mechanisms of domination operating in discourse, both understood as linguistic interaction and also in the Foucauldian understanding of the term, may be seen in the works of two authors analysing the same public sphere event, namely the Clarence Thomas confirmation controversy in the USA¹⁰⁰. Norma Mendoza-Denton shows how on the micro-level of interaction power may be captured in the way male judges used silence, tag questions as opposed to yes-no questions, and topic-switching techniques to derail the woman's case and support the testimony of the defendant.¹⁰¹ On a slightly more discursive level, she explores the ethnic speech styles used by the individual in order to present his case from a racial perspective, which were unavailable to the woman's speech situation.¹⁰²

Another asymmetry in the same event was shown by Nancy Fraser, who pointed out the negotiation of the highly gendered notion of private sphere as a sacred domain,

¹⁰⁰ The event was a televised inquiry into a sexual harassment charge filed against Thomas by a former employee, Anita Hill.

¹⁰¹ Norma Mendoza-Denton 'Pregnant Pauses: Silence and Authority in the Anita Hill- Clarence Thomas Hearings' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds.) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 54-59.

¹⁰² The speech styles include "*testifyin*, *sermonizin* and *signifyin*", Ibid., 63.

which again was shown to operate for the benefit of the male defendant.¹⁰³ The case was shown to be an example of social negotiation of gender and privacy, a key component of the public discourse on masculinity and femininity. Approaches such as the two presented above allow us to trace some of the intricate mechanisms of domination in communication, seen both as a linguistic behaviour and as social practice.

Summing up, 'the dynamic paradigm' does promise new possibilities to develop the study of gender and language. Interestingly, the deconstructive approach may go towards the celebration of the differences made even more relative than in the case of the traditional difference paradigm. Alternatively, and perhaps more usefully, it can be seen as a study of the fluid performance of gender, with multiple meanings available and with potentially open, though reciprocally related gender positions, but without bypassing the mechanisms of domination.

The deconstructive approach should adopt a non-monolithic notion of power in discourse, one which allows for the conceptualisation of new, non-prefigured, formations of gendered identities through discursive resistance. In order to do this, we first have to assess the construction of gender ideologies, which restrict the formation of gendered positions. On the level of gender ideology (ideological practice), the two gender constructs are fluid, dialectical but are maintained as

¹⁰³ Nancy Fraser, 'Sex, Lies and The Public Sphere: Reflections on the Confirmation of Clarence Thomas' in Joan B. Landes (ed.) *Feminism, the Public and Private*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 321.

socially asymmetrical.¹⁰⁴ We need to account for the way the opposition is created, what mechanisms are used to establish it, and keep the asymmetrical relationship between the understanding of the masculine and feminine. Yet in order to be able to carry out such an account, we need to consider further what a discursive approach to power means in a wider theoretical/philosophical framework.

¹⁰⁴ This in itself, is of course also a construction of gender 'theory' or, of a 'discourse on women'.

CHAPTER 2

Opening up new conceptualisations of discourse and power: critical and feminist discourse theory

'Poststructuralism' indicates a field of critical practices that cannot be totalised and that therefore, interrogate the formative and exclusionary power of discourse in the construction of sexual difference¹⁰⁵

In Chapter 1, I discussed the understanding of 'women's language' as an ideological construct within linguistic approaches to gender, paying close attention to the treatment of power relations and the construction of gender that the particular theories imply. The most recent, 'dynamic' paradigm is based on the poststructuralist theorisations of language, and, in particular, on the work of Michel Foucault.¹⁰⁶ However, we have to assess this theory carefully, if it is to be used in the feminist scholarship on language and gender. As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, feminist scholars need a theory of discourse seen as social communication that can take into account power and domination, (or better, for the attempts at dominating). Moreover, the relationship between discourse and its social, or material effects is of

¹⁰⁵ Judith Butler and Joan Scott, (eds.) 'Introduction', *Feminists Theorise the Political* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), xiii.

central importance for feminist theory and politics. In this chapter, I will present materialist feminist and critical discourse approaches which present insights into the understanding of discourse that may be useful in researching gender, discourse and power. The different paradigms offered by discourse theory will be assessed, as they allow for a theorisation of discourse that is more in tune with the needs of a self-reflexive, feminist, political agenda.

2.1 *Discourse as social interaction*

The shift from the study of 'women's language' to the understanding of 'woman's language as an ideological construct', which I presented in the previous chapter, is important as it corresponds to a similar shift in feminist and critical theorisations, from a stress on language as an 'existing reality' to the study of discourse as a 'social construction'. This poststructuralist approach is best summed up by Weedon:

If language is the site where meaningful experience is constituted, then language also determines how we perceive possibilities for change. Language, in this sense, consists of a range of discourses which offer different versions of the meanings of social relations and their effects on the individual. The way in which we interpret these social relations has important political implications.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Travistock, 1972)

¹⁰⁷ Weedon, 82.

I have to stress here that this approach implies several understandings of discourse.¹⁰⁸ One understanding of discourse corresponds roughly to the notion of language in use or 'language in action', that is, of particular communicative events with stretches of verbal interaction which can be studied with careful attention to its sequences, turns and context. This corresponds roughly to the notion of discourse as it would be used by a sociolinguist. The other is the study of discourse on a slightly more abstract level, where a discourse is understood as a representation, a total sum of statements, texts and interactions within a topical or institutional domain, including rules of their production.¹⁰⁹ This second understanding corresponds to a poststructuralist view of language as part of social practice. The two understandings of discourse are interconnected: in order to study discourse as a collection of available meanings on a particular subject, we need to turn to the analysis of particular communicative acts seen as perpetrating or challenging and extending those meanings. Both meanings are important for my analysis, however, it is the second meaning that provides a broader scope for the analysis of discourse in social context.

Yet, it is precisely this connection between discourse as representation and discourse as social practice that provides a basis for a newer understanding of power in social interaction and supports a view of language as a form of social practice imbued with power relations. This understanding of discourse as social interaction, and the issues of power and ideology, need to be examined here as the possibility of theorising

¹⁰⁸ For an exploration of various understandings of discourse see, Ruth Wodak, *Disorders of Discourse* (London and New York: Longman, 1996)15-16.

domination and resistance in discourse depends on which understanding of the nature of discourse and ideology in social life we adopt. Perhaps the most important theorisations in relation to these issues have been provided by the work of Michel Foucault.

2.2 *Poststructuralist (Foucauldian) understanding of discursive power*

Foucault's understanding of discourse points to the mechanisms of exclusion, disciplining and restricting as discursive power: 'In appearance speech may well be of little account, but the prohibitions surrounding it soon reveal its links with desire and power'.¹¹⁰ He enumerates the mechanisms of exclusion guarding the power of discourse, such as the development of disciplines, doctrines and the institution of authorship.¹¹¹ Moreover, he points out that the very participation in discourse is restricted to some speaking subjects:

This amounts to rarefication among speaking subjects: none may enter into discourse on a specific subject unless he has satisfied certain conditions, or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so. More significantly, no areas of discourse are equally open and penetrable; some are forbidden territory. (...) ¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Mary Talbot, *Language and Gender. An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 145.

¹¹⁰ Michel Foucault, 'The Discourse on Language', in Richard Kerney and Mara Rainwater (eds.) *The Continental Philosophy Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 340.

¹¹¹ See Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 3-76.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 349

He also argues that sexuality and politics are two domains of discourse that are most highly contested and most controlled of all, in the sense that most power and restriction goes into their production.¹¹³ This may well explain the feminist inquiry into and critique of both these discursive domains.

Moreover, his theory is important inasmuch as it points to the materiality and regulation of discourse through institutions, which would allow for some notion of domination mechanisms to be developed. However, the theory does not develop such an understanding, since the mechanisms are seen as inherent *within* discourse itself, or at least are placed at the limits of discourse. Discursive relations 'characterise not the language (langue) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is employed, but the discourse itself as a practice'.¹¹⁴ Thus, it seems that it is the discourse itself that is exercising exclusion and restricting subject positions in the Foucauldian understanding of domination. The social reality is understood to be the primary source, a material for discursive formations, and these in turn determine the available understandings of the social reality. How to study the relationship between the nondiscursive and discursive practices is not pointed out.¹¹⁵ What is more, all possibility of change is dependent on chance, and therefore cannot be easily predicted:

I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role

¹¹³ Ibid., 340.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁵ This point was made by Rosemary Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 41.

is to avert its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality.¹¹⁶

In the light of this understanding of the nature of discursive power, Foucault's theory proves interesting but also controversial for feminist scholarship. Firstly, power cannot be captured as it permeates all discursive and social relations. Secondly, power is envisaged as 'productive' that is not only repressing and restricting practices but also producing them.¹¹⁷ As Nancy Fraser points out, this complex notion of power is normatively neutral, and does not allow us to clearly distinguish 'acceptable from unacceptable forms of power'.¹¹⁸ This does not make the notion of power particularly useful since there are no easy ways to point out who is repressing and who is resisting. In this view, domination means that the dominated are so much entangled in the power-ridden practicess that we cannot adopt a clear normative perspective. Yet, from a feminist perspective, women are, more systematically than Foucault's theory allows us to grasp, placed in the less-powerful (if never completely powerless) positions. We cannot afford to claim that power, just like social change, cannot be captured in some centralised locations, contexts or institutions. Following Fraser's critique 'there can be no social practices without power - but it doesn't follow that all forms of power are normatively equivalent nor that any social practices are as good as any other'.¹¹⁹ According to Nancy Harstock, Foucault can only claim such a perspective looking from a privileged position, being to some

¹¹⁶ Foucault, 'The Discourse on Language', 340.

¹¹⁷ Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 27.

extent close to the centre of power, yet maintaining that no centres of power can be penetrated.¹²⁰

As regards the notion of ideology, his theory is especially ambivalent. The concept of ideology is seen by Foucault as inherently problematic:

The notion of ideology appears to me difficult to use for three reasons. The first is that, whether one wants it to be or not, it is always in virtual opposition to something like the truth (...) The second inconvenience is that it refers to, necessarily I believe, to something like the subject. Thirdly, ideology is in a secondary position in relation to something which must function as the infra-structure or economic or material determinant for it.¹²¹

Again, there are a number of problems with this approach. Feminist inquiry into the linguistic construction of gender is concerned with subjectivities, not only subject positions. No feminist perspective would be possible without a certain normative stance, that is, without privileging the truths of the subjugated over those of the dominant group, and most importantly, without conceptualising a link between discourse and 'reality' in its material, not merely discursive dimension. Furthermore, Foucault is not interested in evaluating any system of beliefs, but rather he suspends moral judgement and concentrates on how 'power/knowledge regimes' are produced.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 31,33.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹²⁰ See, for example, Nancy Harstock, 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?' in L.J. Nicholson (ed.) *From Feminism to Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990)

¹²¹ Foucault (1979: 36), quoted by Mills, 32

Nevertheless, Foucault's insight is important inasmuch as it shifts the level of analysis from the state institutions or economy onto the level of the 'politics of everyday life'.¹²³ The contribution Foucault's theory makes is the dynamic understanding of power, which functions on the level of everyday practices mediated through discourse.¹²⁴ My concern is precisely with the construction of discourses on women as an ideology which is realised in social practice. We may therefore conceive of *ideological practices* in discourse. In my view, it is precisely through studying discursive practices that we may say something about the functioning and negotiation of ideologies.

2.3 *Materialist feminist theory of power and discourse*

The notions of ideology, and the materiality of discourse are taken up within a theory of materialist feminism, which sees discourse as a social practice, as well as a system of signification. In particular, Rosemary Hennessy's¹²⁵ materialist feminism argues for a close connection between the 'reality' and discourse, as well as reworking the

¹²² Fraser, 20.

¹²³ Ibid., 26.

¹²⁴ For a further discussion/critique of feminist readings of Foucault, see for example, Nancy Harstock, 'Postmodernism and Political Change: Issues for Feminist Theory' and Amy Allen 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Feminists' in Susan J. Hekman (ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Michael Foucault* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) and Janet Ransom, 'Feminism, Difference and Discourse. The Limits of Discursive Analysis For Feminism' in Caroline Ramazanoglu (ed.) *Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹²⁵ This discussion of materialist feminism is primarily based on Rosemary Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993)

concept of ideology with the purpose of a feminist critique of social relations in mind. Discourse is seen as producing the material relations in society by 'inserting the social subject into the historical contest over meanings and resources'.¹²⁶ Hennessy argues that postmodern academy should not only show the fluidity of subjectivities and the diversity of cultures or the difference and historicity of social organisation, but to attend to the connection between the knowledge and power shaping and creating these differences.

As a way of reading the texts of culture understood in this way, she proposes **ideology critique**, which must be committed to recognising and making explicit those concrete 'contesting interests at stake in the discursive constructions of the social'.¹²⁷ Hennessy also argues that despite the fluidity and multiplicity of meanings, the workings of power can be traced in the construction of the dominant views of 'the truth' and the social reality as suiting concrete social agents and their interests. The critique of such meanings is to be based on a processes of *disarticulation* and *rearticulation* whose legitimacy must be based on its explanatory power and its commitment to emancipatory social change.¹²⁸

The ideology critique must be understood in relation to the notion of ideology itself and to the concept of the social. Ideology, according to Hennessy, is similar to theory inasmuch as it is the very practice of **meaning making** which is understood as 'the

¹²⁶ Ibid., xvii.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 15.

effect of struggles over resources and power that are played out through the discourses of culture and the modes of reading they allow'.¹²⁹ The way we understand what counts as 'the social' is already an ideology. To create a theory means to be engaged in concrete social practice, and, therefore, a theory is in itself an ideological construct:

As ideology, theory is one of many cultural narratives ,(...) all theories are ways of making sense and as such have a materiality in that they help shape the formation of social subjects as well as what comes to count as the 'real' or the 'truth'.¹³⁰

This notion of ideology applies to both scientific and common-sense theories of the social, and in this respect feminist scholarship can be understood as deconstructing the dominant ideologies, as well as proposing its alternative vision of the social. Of course, there is an ongoing struggle between feminist reconceptualisations of reality and the dominant discourses, which aim at incorporating the resisting discourses for the interests of institutions and powerful social and economic actors. Hennessy's definitions of the social, theory and ideology and the materiality of language/discourse seem to be especially interesting for the study of any social discourse on gender, including, of course, feminist discourse itself. Hennessy's notion of texts as 'historically constructed, traversed by power relations and constitutive of social value'¹³¹ is definitely valuable as a theoretical basis of an

¹²⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹³¹ Ibid., 12.

analysis of the way discourse is used to negotiate the dominant and subversive notions of gender.

This is especially relevant for my study of discourse on gender in the public sphere, understood as the institutional, state, and media setting more or less available for the general public, not always in the sense of participation, but at least in the sense of the availability of their discourses and their power of forming, institutionalising, or negotiating the dominant worldviews¹³².

2.4 *Critical discourse theory*

Another paradigm which is concerned with analysing the discourse and power interplay, both in particular interactions and in discourse seen as representation, is critical discourse analysis (CDA). It provides further relevant theoretical and methodological concepts, especially the dialectical relationship between discourse and reality. The theory summarised here is based on Chouliarki and Fairclough.¹³³ This view sees social life as action and argues for an understanding of discourse as 'semiotic elements of social practices'.¹³⁴ Discourse is both social action, and a product of that action, a form of its representation. It comprises of both linguistic and

¹³² The methodological and linguistic categories and strategies needed to carry out such a critique will be addressed in Chapter 3.

¹³³ Lilie Chouliarki and Norman Fairclough *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999)

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

non-linguistic communication and other forms of social semiosis whose function is to both instantiate and transform social reality.

Thus, unlike in sociolinguistics, differences in language use or form are not seen as effects of pre-existing social difference, but as both effects and potential causes of it.¹³⁵ Similarly, discourse is seen as permeated with the relationships of power, and, at the same time, is maintaining and can potentially be transforming these relationships.¹³⁶ This view is compatible with the dynamic understanding of power, but does not do away with possible processes of domination. Instead, its own principle, referred to as 'the logic of critical analysis' is concerned with 'assessing how the discourse moment works within social practice, from the point of view of its effects on power struggles and relations of domination'.¹³⁷ The notion of ideology reappears in connection with this:

Practices are partly discursive (talking, writing, etc. is one way of acting) but they are discursively represented. In so far as such practices help sustain relations of domination within the practice, they are ideological.¹³⁸

This is definitely the case with any discursive practice aimed at preserving a single view on gender, which places women in an asymmetrical relationship to men in

¹³⁵ Ibid., 47.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 37.

whichever domain of social life, including language. The question of ideology in discourse is also discussed by Wodak:

Discourse does ideological work: Ideologies are particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation. (...) to determine whether a particular type of discursive event does ideological work, it is not enough to analyse texts - one also needs to consider how texts are interpreted and received and what social effects texts have.¹³⁹

This view of ideology could perhaps be considered as a function of, what is referred to using Foucault's, as 'the orders of discourse' and defined as 'the socially ordered sets of genres and discourses associated with a particular social field, characterised in terms of shifting boundaries and flows between them'.¹⁴⁰ This does not only mean that the orders of discourse are constantly reworked as they are employed in discursive moments, but it may also mean that there are indeed possibilities for resistance, even within heavily ideological discourses. Thus, power and resistance are found to counteract each other. But, unlike in Foucault's understanding, this does not preclude the possibility of pinpointing the discursive moves towards domination and how they are realised. Within CDA, the stress is precisely on disclosing the effects of the power struggle and its very work in action in particular moments of social interaction:

¹³⁹ Ruth Wodak, *The Disorders of Discourse* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 18.

¹⁴⁰ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 58.

...[P]ower is not simply exercised but fought over, and fought over in discourse, and (...) the interdiscursive articulation of different genres and discourses is (amongst other things) a strategy of power struggle - a way in which power is internalised in discourse¹⁴¹

Another aspect of texts as ideological constructs is their social effect. In order to address the social effects of power struggles, and in order to be able to recommend changes, the 'explanatory critique' needs to be carried out on multiple levels, starting from the perception of the discursively realised problem, through analysis of the discursive practice at large and in its particular instantiation, to arriving at the understanding of the functions of the problem in the practice.¹⁴² Critical discourse analysis demands attention to both structure and interaction:

The structural dimension attends to how interaction is constrained by the network of orders of discourse, while the interactional dimension attends to how that network is interactionally worked and potentially restructured through a rearticulation of resources.¹⁴³

Moreover, both of these dimensions are characterised by intertextuality and interdiscursivity: 'on one level it is the presence in my discourse of the specific words of the other, on another level it is the combination in discourse of different genres-or, we might add, different discourses'.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 62.

¹⁴² Ibid., 60.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 59.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 49.

2.5 *Feminist poststructuralist approaches to discourse, gender and power*

All the above-discussed theorisations can be linked to feminist poststructuralist approaches to discourse. Foucault's theory is a starting point for all of them, and has been taken up but also reworked significantly by feminist poststructuralists. The two major differences concern the understanding of the effects of discursive power and the understanding of the subject of discourse. According to Chris Weedon, the dispersed power in discourse and the post-modern notion of unfixable meaning does not preclude the study of the (effects of) discursive power:

To subscribe to the provisional nature of meaning is not to imply that it does not have real effects. Whereas, in deconstruction, language is an infinite process of difference and the deferral of fixed meanings, feminist poststructuralism, concerned as it must be with power, looks to the historically and socially specific discursive production of conflicting and competing meanings. These meanings are only fixed temporarily, but this temporary fixing has important social implications.¹⁴⁵

Thus, feminist post-structuralism firstly studies discursive practices precisely in order to pinpoint those meanings produced through discourse (on women) that have real and exclusionary effects on women themselves. Secondly, this approach does not make the subject 'cease to exist' at all. Though the understanding of multiple and shifting subject positions is still very much at the centre of attention, the woman as

¹⁴⁵ Weedon, 82.

an individual created by these subject positions is still present. Again, Weedon sums it up well:

Although the subject in poststructuralism is socially constructed in discursive practices, she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of a clash between contradictory subject positions and practices. She is also a subject able to reflect upon the discursive relations which constitute her and the society in which she lives, and able to chose from the options available.¹⁴⁶

Once we make such a differentiation between the woman's subjectivity and her various subject positions there is indeed scope for research into the discursive that is potentially empowering for women, as it allows for a reflection of innovations, resistances and the moments of change. However, keeping this possibility in mind, we still have to consider carefully how the effects of discourse on women's reality can be foregrounded.

As for the linkage of feminist and critical discourse theory, the elaboration of the dialectical understanding of discourse for the study of gender has been proposed by De Lauretis, who claims that 'the representation of gender [in discourse] is its construction',¹⁴⁷ and one that 'assigns meaning (...) to individuals within society'.¹⁴⁸ In other words, the discourses on gender or femininity are a product of representation

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 121.

¹⁴⁷ Teresa De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.

that becomes inscribed in individuals as their self-representation.¹⁴⁹ This definition also follows in the footsteps of Foucault's understanding of discourse, though it does not concern itself with understanding of merely subject positions. On the contrary, we may see also how discourse and actual people interact incessantly. Smith shows that it is women as actual individuals who produce their identity in discourse and produce the 'reality' through discourse.¹⁵⁰ These subject positions inscribe themselves in women as subjects and agents of discourse:

Members of discourse orient themselves to the order of the discourse in talk, writing, creating images whether in texts or on their bodies, producing and determined by the ongoing order which is their concerted accomplishment and arises in the concerting.¹⁵¹

This approach foregrounds the effects of discourse as constitutive of social reality; in particular the effects of discursive practice for women themselves. Such a theory is not at odds with a materialist feminist understanding of the production and effects of difference through discourse.

The notion of reconstruction is implied by Scott and Butler in their assessment of the feminist deconstruction of texts, this time referring to political theory itself as a form of discourse:

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵⁰ Dorothy Smith, 'Femininity as Discourse', *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* (London: Routledge, 1990), 160.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 161-162.

To perform a feminist deconstruction of some of the primary terms of political discourse is in no sense to censor their usage, negate them, or to announce their anachronicity. On the contrary, this kind of analysis requires that these terms be reused and rethought, exposed to strategic instruments and effects, and subjected to a critical reinscription and redeployment.¹⁵²

Thus, we have established that social practices are, to a large degree, discursive. According to Smith, the social practices of modern times are even more discursive than ever before, due to the amount, availability and importance of texts negotiating social reality, and especially gender.¹⁵³ In this respect, our 'actual', material reality is to a large degree constituted by discourse, or even, it is discourse.¹⁵⁴ This conception of the materiality of discourse is particularly important for justifying why an inquiry into language (discourse-based analysis of textual material) is also an analysis of the social reality.

In general, a post-structuralist feminist approach is a politically engaged and critical stance to the study of power relations and their effects established and mediated by discourse, but having a material functioning in a variety of ways; for example, through producing women's subjectivities. This approach, similarly to a critical linguistic one, points to the importance of studying the discourses on women as the sites for the power struggle over gender. But there are important decisions to be

¹⁵² Judith Butler and Joan Scott, *Feminists Theorise the Political*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992). xiv.

¹⁵³ Smith, 168.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 166.

made with regard to which discourse locations and which discourses to foreground in such an analysis:

The options available to women in the battle to define our femininity, social role and the meaning of our experience are many. However, they exist in a hierarchical network of antagonistic relations in which certain versions of femininity and the sexual division of labour have more social and institutional power than others. In order to develop strategies to contest hegemonic assumptions and the social practices which they guarantee, we need to understand the intricate network of discourses, the sites where they are articulated and the institutionally legitimised forms of knowledge to which they look for their justification.¹⁵⁵

The understanding of power relations is thus a primary aim of a feminist poststructuralist analysis. Yet, it is also important to evaluate the other, resisting possibilities of discourse.

2.6 Resistance through counter-discourse?

Having introduced some of the ways of conceptualising discourse, power, and ideology, as well as the dialectical understanding of discourse, it is important to return to the concept of resistance. Where does discourse theory, especially in its feminist, materialist and critical form, lead us in terms of a possible

¹⁵⁵ Weedon, 122.

reconceptualisation of power that will allow us to see the emancipatory, not just exclusionary workings of power in discourse?

Critical and materialist discourse theory makes it possible to conceptualise the power inherent in discourse in connection with ideology. But can we envisage a counter-ideology discourse, or an alternative view of the social? Essentially there are two ways in which discourse can be seen as resisting power. The perspective offered by discourse theory in its various discussions of social reality in dialectical relationship with discourse also points to the dynamic nature of social interaction, which has not been overlooked by feminist linguists and became the basis of research within the 'deconstructive' paradigm. Thus, Cameron points out that the study of the construction of gender should attend to its dynamic social existence: 'each individual subject must constantly negotiate the norms, behaviours, and discourses that define masculinity or femininity for a particular community for a particular point in time'.¹⁵⁶ That is, through the ideologies of women's language, women communicate and negotiate their meanings, perform, but possibly also resist the hegemonic discourse *in practice*. Even though this negotiation takes place in everyday existence,¹⁵⁷ it becomes especially unavoidable whenever women enter public sphere institutions which place contradictory demands on them.¹⁵⁸ For example, Victoria Bergevall has shown how female engineering students negotiate the norms on

¹⁵⁶ Cameron, 'The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation', 45.

¹⁵⁷ See for example the study of the construction of roles in marital conversations: Elinor Ochs and Carolyn Taylor, 'The "Father Knows Best" Dynamic in Dinnertime Narratives' in Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (eds.) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 97-120.

¹⁵⁸ This happens because of the gendered and often, masculinist, character of the public sphere which women must negotiate.

femininity as juxtaposed with the norms of a masculinist institution in their day to day interaction, even when claiming that there is no such thing as discrimination or gender problematic in their lives.¹⁵⁹

Thus, women do engage in negotiation with the dominant ideology, which is constantly reaffirmed and transgressed. This is why a study of discourse in action and in context may illuminate such resisting practices. However, though incessant, negotiation is not necessarily perceived as such by the participants, as Berevall's example shows. Indeed, without the metalevel of any awareness of domination and resistance, can new subject positions be created? The question remains to be answered by further research into interaction.

The transgression of ideology is possible on another level, that of feminist critique. The recent work on verbal hygiene by Deborah Cameron is a good example of how feminist linguists in particular can offer criticism of the discourses on language and gender. Her analysis could be seen as an example of ideology critique in Hennessy's understanding¹⁶⁰ Thus, feminist linguistics may also be an example of another understanding of women's language. Feminist linguistics itself is a form of discourse on gender, as it elaborates, or problematises both folklinguistic, and scientific views on women's language. Without doubt, it has managed to problematise the dominant

¹⁵⁹ Victoria L. Bergevall, 'Constructing and Enacting Gender Through Discourse: Negotiating Multiple Roles as Female Engineering Students' in Victoria L. Bergvall, Janet M. Bing and Alice F. Freed (eds.) *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice* (London: Longman, 1996), 173-201.

¹⁶⁰ Cameron's, *Verbal Hygiene*, 168-211.

ideology to some extent, and it has been critical of those theorists within its own ranks that have been charged with maintaining the status quo.¹⁶¹

Not only feminist linguistics, but feminist theory in general, could perhaps be understood as women's language in this sense - as counter-ideological, or even anti-ideological discourse of women. In Hennessy's terms, the understanding of feminism itself as 'a way of making sense of the world' makes it possible to see it as a 'counter-hegemonic discourse'.¹⁶² It is possibly an anti-ideology because of its 'emancipatory reach' and 'disruptive work', which it undertakes within the dominant practices and meanings, thus as a transgression of the dominant ideology.¹⁶³ In this understanding, feminist theorisation becomes the emancipatory 'women's language'.

Feminism as a political movement can also be defined as 'women's language' or 'voice', in the sense of women voicing a demand for inclusion in the public sphere as participants in this interaction, especially when it comes to defining their own roles, problems or interests. In this sense, feminism can be conceptualised as a discourse of participants in social interaction with the aim of changing women's material position, as well as disclosing the mechanisms by which women's contributions to public discourse were previously (and still are) muted, dominated and interpreted,

¹⁶¹ See, for example, Troemel-Ploetz's critique of Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand* - 'Selling the Apolitical', *Discourse and Society* 2, no. 4 (October 1991)

¹⁶² Hennessy, 38.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 38.

without women themselves having a voice, even in the matters of their own interest.

164

The primary question is whether the counter-discourse manages to go beyond the dominant ideology, and whether it can indeed produce new models of identity, or 'femininity' in relation to, but not in subordination to 'masculinity'. To put it in Hennessy's terms, the question remains whether, and to what extent, feminism is able to provide 'a model for the articulation of a new subject of knowledge', or whether it is 'absorbed by the hegemonic culture'.¹⁶⁵ Susan Gal claims that: '[practices of resistance]' always occur in the shadow of domination and in response to it.'¹⁶⁶

Yet, even speaking of such alternative discourses as always acting in response to domination, she talks about 'women's language' as an example of anti-language.¹⁶⁷

Moreover, apart from studying the varying everyday practices of women as a way of finding the alternative women's language, she suggests that: 'Finding the attempts at resistance will tell us about where and how power is exerted, and knowing how institutions of power work will tell us where to look for possible signs of

¹⁶⁴ Interestingly, in her recent work, Lakoff makes this point, stressing that women in western societies have gone through having no voice at all, to having no symbolic voice, understood as a right to participate in the negotiation of social meanings, Robin Lakoff, 'Cries and Whispers: the Shattering of the Silence' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds.) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 30.

¹⁶⁵ Hennessy, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Susan Gal, 'Language, Gender, and Power: An Anthropological Review' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds.) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 176.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 171.

resistance'.¹⁶⁸ Following this advice, we should also look at the institutions where power is invested and find out how women are trying to gain their voice and put forward their interests where they were traditionally excluded. Therefore, I intend to concentrate on the discourse on women in the Polish political debate, because, though women are present and active in this discursive location, there are indeed highly conflicting interests at work in terms of disciplining women into the acceptable discursive positions. Thus, it is a good example of an institution of power, particularly power invested in discourse on women. The question that remains is: to what degree is re-negotiation and change possible in this context?

Before the analysis is undertaken, it is important to establish the methodology which will allow us to translate the theoretical concepts into analytical tools. This will be the purpose of Chapter 3, which will also introduce and explain the choice of the material for analysis, the concept of the study, and the research questions to be answered in the course of the analysis.

¹⁶⁸ Gal, 176.

CHAPTER 3

From theoretical concepts to issues of methodology and the categories of analysis

For feminists, the attempt to understand power in all its forms is of central importance.¹⁶⁹

3.1. *Translating theoretical concepts into analytical tools*

The social understanding of language calls for an analysis of discourse, and hence, the material analysed by me is textual/interactive. This means employing particular textual and discursive categories which should allow us to make claims related to the theoretical level, that is to the proposed model for understanding discourses on women (which generates also what could be understood as women's discourse). Finding the necessary tools for the analysis is essentially a process of translating the theoretical into the methodological categories.¹⁷⁰ In this chapter, I present how I have

¹⁶⁹ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 120.

¹⁷⁰ The problem of translatability of theoretical categories analytical ones is raised by Erzsebet Barat, 'A Relational Model of Identity', PhD Thesis, Lancaster: Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language, 1999), 65.

approached this issue, and what I have established as my methodological and analytical tools.

3.2 *Introducing discourses on women in the Polish political sphere*

The understanding of discourse as a site of social struggle over the meanings of femininity may be seen in any social institution. However, the stakes over discourse are high especially in the public sphere, as that is where the struggle over legitimisation of the dominant meanings as well as struggle for social transformation, takes place in, and through discourse.

In the Polish public sphere, there are ongoing battles over the meanings of femininity, the purpose of which is to construct the dominant 'theories on women', and limit available subject positions for women themselves. These struggles are particularly immediate if we consider the outcomes of this battle over what counts as women's interest in the state institutions. The state is an institution invested with great power to transform the discursive into the material: the effects of parliamentary debates are legitimised and legalised shaping both the limits of 'acceptable discourse', as well as structuring women's experience in very real terms. Due to widespread conservative positions displayed, this institution can be seen as the site of

the most exclusionary discourse on femininity, although it may potentially be also a site of social transformation.

These discourses are important to study as the representations of women are a site of a larger battle over the shape of social relations in the whole society, and this has material effects for women and for their social, economic and, political resources, as well as for the forms of agency available to them. On the one hand, it seems that the emergence of the new nation state and the developing capitalism have somehow been combined with the resurgence of traditionalist discourses on women.¹⁷¹ Obviously, the relationship between the nation state, new capitalism and gender relations is not a clear or straightforward one, but gender seems to be playing quite an important role as a focus of political and public sphere debate in Poland. This role definitely deserves some more focused research. On the other hand, it has been argued that the democratisation process has opened up space for alternative and powerful discourse locations in the sites of the media, and various alternative political institutions, such as women's organisations, that can freely oppose the dominant discourses. Moreover, Polish politicians are engaged in the contradictory battle for the return to the nation-state versus inclusion in global economy and supra-national government structures by virtue of the integration into the European Union. In this contradiction may lie another key to the intensity of the struggle over national

¹⁷¹ Similar argument is made by Jocqui True, 'Gendering Post-Socialist Transitions' in Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan (eds.), *Gender And Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites, and Resistances* (London: Routledge, 2000), 84. See also an assessment of gender and nation state building in Eastern Europe in Tanya Rener and Mirjana Ule, 'Back to the Future: Nationalism and Gender in Post-Socialist States' in Rick Wilford and Robert Miller (eds) *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: the Politics of Transition* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 121-125.

identity, family, and morals, all of which generate the hegemonic, and possibly also the alternative discourses on women. The undeniable effect of the democratisation process is that the dominant views, as exclusionary and hurtful as they may be for a lot of women, are in a state of partial and precarious domination. They are able to dominate within the political sphere for the moment, utilising Church and other sources of exclusionary meanings, such as science, to build their position in relation to women as the only acceptable one. Yet, they may also be faced with possible counter-discourses fighting for a redefinition of the acceptable positions for women.

It is this particular gendering discourse, that I am interested in analysing first of all. I am looking at the political sphere from within the academic interest on gender and language and critical discourse theory in order to capture this struggle over meanings of femininity in my linguistic material: the transcripts of parliamentary debates. I will analyse these competing discourses within the Polish political sphere using parliamentary debates in order to see how women are being constructed by the hegemonic discourse, and, similarly, what are the manifest counter-positions available. However, I suspect that the discursive struggle over femininity will also throw some light on the discursive construction of the state, social relations, citizenship or national identity.

Polish parliamentary debates are especially vital in this respect, as there is an explicit battle over the rights of women, and what is being negotiated has material effects for women's lives. One important example is the anti-abortion bill, resulting from a

heated discursive battle, fought in successive parliaments, in the Church and in women's organisations.¹⁷² The parliament's division of power made it possible to introduce the anti-abortion bill, and thus to legalise one vision of femininity in relation to motherhood; control over sexuality and reproduction as well as morality. The right wing Catholic-nationalist discourse has thus been legitimised particularly in relation to women's issues.¹⁷³ This has also increased state regulation over women's lives and has resulted in the 'policing' of reproduction (abortion as a practice did not disappear, although it is now illegal and very expensive, which has produced a lucrative abortion underground, and abortion tourism). In my analysis I will try to consider how such meanings are discursively constructed.

A possible division between the two distinct sides in the political discourse on women has been pointed out by Joanna Bator,¹⁷⁴ who distinguishes between 'the inequality discourse' and 'the equality discourse' in Polish parliamentary debates. The former refers to the construction of womanhood and women's roles as naturally and socially different from men's, used for legitimising a conservative vision of women's rights. What Bator calls 'the equality discourse',¹⁷⁵ is, within the parliamentary politics, mainly centred around liberal feminist and leftist values.

¹⁷² For a general assessment of the earlier stages of the abortion debate see, Malgorzata Fuszara, 'Abortion and the Formation of the Public Sphere in Poland', in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds) *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) or Wanda Nowicka, 'Ban on Abortion in Poland. Why?' in Tanya Renne (ed.) *Anna's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1997)

¹⁷³ See, for example, Urszula Nowakowska, 'The new Right and Fundamentalism' in Tanya Renne (ed.) *Anna's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1997).

Bator argues that the two positions amount to two political languages, between which there is no communication or understanding possible, because the debate is both carried out on two different levels of culture, with the 'inequality' discourse representing a more backward, uneducated treatment of gender issues. While such an assessment makes sense for a political-scientific understanding of language as some set of values and rules that a particular political group espouses, for a linguistic analysis it is not enough. I start from the assumption that there are two ideological perspectives, two distinct positions that are *being constructed* as incompatible *in the process* and in the representations of the debate. Moreover, I would like to find out how the 'estrangement' and 'compatibility' of the two positions is created, in what aspects they are constructed as different. My claim is that the supposed lack of communication results from deliberate interpretive choices that can be traced and analysed. This needs to be proved in the analysis itself.

3.3 *The understanding of discourse*

An important aspect of discourse, which it is necessary to stress for the purpose of my analysis, is the relationship between discourse, power (hegemony), and ideology. Moreover, the dialectical nature of discourse, as an action and a representation of that action, must be stressed. Finally, the relationship between the discursive and

¹⁷⁴ Joanna Bator, *Wizerunek kobiety w polskiej debacie publicznej: perspektywa feministyczna* (The image of a woman in the Polish public debate: a feminist perspective) (Warsaw: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, 1999), 17,

non-discursive practices has to be considered. All these aspects of discourse have been the concern of both feminist and critical discourse theories, however the most useful theorisation for the purpose of my work is that offered by Critical Discourse Analysis and some feminist theories, which go furthest in their critical explanation of the power struggles within discourse. These approaches are useful for building a theoretical framework to study the construction and functioning of gender in discourse. This means that while I am moving into analysing discourses on women, it is important to see that these discourses are also used by women interacting and performing the construction of their own femininity.

Critical Discourse Analysis sees discourse as a form of **social interaction** and a part of **social practice** permeated by **power relations** usually masked by ideology, which, in turn, serves the establishment and the maintenance of hegemony of some social groups over others.¹⁷⁶ **Ideology**, according to Norman Fairclough, means 'significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities) which are built into various dimensions of the forms and meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of **relations of domination**'.¹⁷⁷ For me, the vital aspect of the relations of domination is the asymmetrical character of social relations between men and women, leading to unequal political and cultural power and unequal economic resources, as well as a marked control over women's lives exercised by the state, the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 23.

¹⁷⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 87.

church, the family, school, marriage and all other forms of male-dominated social institutions. This control, or at least the limitation of options and available positions for women, is achieved precisely through the ideological dimension of discursive practices, which create the dominant notions of femininity and naturalise them as common-sense, scientific truth, or morally based laws.

Hegemony is here understood as a partial, and therefore unstable, power or dominance of some social groups which needs to be secured continually through discourse. It is the unstable, fluid aspect of hegemony that allows for the conceptualisation of **social change**.¹⁷⁸ Gender relations are constituted through a network of social, economic, and cultural relations that are constantly established through discursive practices. This means that discursive practices as social practices are both sites in the social struggle as well as stakes in it.¹⁷⁹ This is why an analysis of discursive data may shed light on the existing relations of power, and possible points of social struggle, as well as points of resistance to domination. It is precisely this aspect that makes it possible to pinpoint the struggle between various discursive interpretations of reality (including the relations between men and women) through discourse analysis and to see whether the given situation of struggle may also lead to social change.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 92-93.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 67.

Discourse is seen as **constitutive of** as well as a **representation of** social practice¹⁸⁰. In simple terms, 'discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world, and especially upon each other, as well as mode of representation'¹⁸¹. While discourse is both action and representation, these two dialectically related sides have implications for my understanding of language on women as ideological practice and a product of that practice. Thus, this dialectic understanding of discourse sheds light on the conceptualisation of women's language as a product of discourse on women as well as an enactment of the 'appropriate feminine behaviour'. This also corresponds to the understanding of discourse as a **text** and (social-discursive) **practice**.¹⁸² To rephrase this understanding of discourse, we need to be aware of its multifunctionality and its dialectical nature in relation to the non-discursive. Thus, discourse is multifunctional: we represent and understand reality through it, we act upon the reality through discourse in many ways and we also represent ourselves through it (perform our identities).¹⁸³

However, most of the time, women's language is either understood as an unproblematic individual style or an unproblematic product of the reality of gender difference. In contrast to this view, 'women's language' has already been discussed

¹⁸⁰ This is based on the understanding of Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 38.

¹⁸¹ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 65.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 73, 79.

¹⁸³ For a thorough discussion on this understanding of discourse see Norman Fairclough, 'The Dialectics of Discourse' *Textus* XIV.2 2001, 231-242; Norman Fairclough, 'Critical Discourse Analysis in Researching Language in the New Capitalism: Overdetermination, Transdisciplinarity and Textual Analysis', forthcoming in L. Young (ed) *Systemic Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis*, Continuum 2003

in the first chapter of the thesis in the sense of discourse on women, as part of textual representations of femininity - an ongoing construction motivated by ideological investment into defining and marking the feminine. The study of these constructions is as important as the study of the linguistic behaviour of women in communication, as it sheds light on how women are socially and discursively constructed before and during any communicative practice. This may lead to an analysis of discursive situations as processes of negotiation, enactment or possibly subversion of these ideological constructs of femininity, as well as perhaps allowing for conceptualising alternative discourses on women that are non-exclusionary. In the second chapter, I considered the notion of ideologically invested discourse on women, and the possibility of counter-acting and subverting the ideological constraints by an alternative understanding of women's discourse - one based on feminist critiques of the dominant ideologies of womanhood. In my view, apart from further research on the construct and the practice of 'woman's language' or 'women's communication styles', it is important to take a broader look at the network of various discursive practices in order to see which ideologies in relation to gender, and especially in relation to femininity, are being constructed, supported, or perhaps transformed and undermined in social institutions by both male and female speakers.

As I have mentioned earlier, poststructuralist feminism also stresses the important point that despite their dynamic, fluid functioning, such discourses amount to more than just language play of 'words' or 'texts' on women. As Hennessy demonstrates,

discursive construction of difference has material effects as it shapes available positions, conceptualisations, categorisations and identities of men and women performing 'the social construction of difference'.¹⁸⁴ This leads to the construction of social subjects 'appropriate' for the dominant group's interests.¹⁸⁵ These interests may be of economic, political, or cultural kind; for example, the interests of leading political parties or social, ethnic or religious groups (or rather organisations claiming to represent or embody them).

This material power of discourse may manifest itself in the language of legal codes, scientific publications, marketing and media texts and messages, religious texts and literary works. It is a social process that aims to discipline certain subjects and phenomena that are considered 'unacceptable'. It is also the process of creating systems of 'scientific' or 'common-sense' knowledge, of silencing/dominating practices aimed at regulating others' input into social debate, and imposing limits of the speakable. In my view, a similar vision of the effects of discourse, and especially of the discourse on femininity, is offered by both Smith¹⁸⁶ and de Lauretis¹⁸⁷, who are concerned primarily with media discourses. Each author talks about the material relations between the discursive/textual constructions of femininity and the identities and experiences that they produce. Smith calls this dialectic 'textually mediated

¹⁸⁴ Hennessy, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 9-10.

¹⁸⁶ Dorothy Smith 'Femininity as Discourse' *Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990)

¹⁸⁷ Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987)

social relations',¹⁸⁸ while de Lauretis uses the term 'the technology of gender'¹⁸⁹. Thus, the effects of power of/in discourse are seen as producing oppression and inequality, which does not exclude the aspect of self-production or self-representation of women in the practices in question. This material aspect of discursive relations means that the actual experience of women and their everyday practices are being produced through a text on femininity.

Also, materialist feminism advocates a position of **ideology critique**¹⁹⁰ in response to the discursive constructions of the ideology of gender. This critique may allow for rewriting the dominant categorisations and ascribing them with different meanings.¹⁹¹ Thus, in response to the exclusionary power within discourse, there is the power of resistance, which may lead to subversion/transformation, at least on the level of feminist theorisations and critical analyses of the discursive. As a result, discourses may emerge which may transform the dominant notions of gender and other social relations. This is why it may be possible to rewrite the notion of women's language on the level of theoretical practice, the possibility of which I have discussed in the previous chapter. To my mind, a critical feminist investigation into the hegemonic discourse provides the most insightful women's discourse into the power structures, which may provide an empowering perspective. In this way, feminist discourse and scholarship opens up space for social transformation. This is also the motivation for this research. However, a degree of resistance often occurs

¹⁸⁸ Smith, 167.

¹⁸⁹ de Lauretis, 10.

¹⁹⁰ Hennessy, 15.

within the institutions of power as well, this is why, apart from investigating the hegemonic discourse itself, I am also interested in assessing the existing counter-discourses in order to trace and assess the degree of transformatory power at work. These counter-discourses testify to a struggle over social meanings, although this struggle may also lead to social transformation.

3.4 *Epistemology: the positioning of the researcher*

The problem of the positioning of the researcher needs to be tackled here as it is tied to the choice of methodology which will follow the adopted perspective from which knowledge is being produced. My stance corresponds, to a large extent, to the commitments of critical social science, and in my particular research area, with Critical Discourse Analysis, which treats theory itself as a form of social practice.¹⁹²

As far as feminist approaches to research are concerned, the main position in question is feminist standpoint epistemology, which maintains the necessity of knowledge generated from the margins by the marginalised themselves, and which demands strong reflexivity and accountability on the part of the researcher.¹⁹³ As has been argued by feminist scholar, this contextuality, or positionality does not preclude

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹² Erzsebet Barat, 83-84.

¹⁹³ See especially, Sandra Harding's concept of strong objectivity in Sandra Harding, 'Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity"?' in L. Alkoff and E. Potter (eds) *Feminist Epistemologies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 57; Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1998), 253-254.

either objectivity nor some forms of responsible generalisations.¹⁹⁴ On the contrary, it should lead to a development of 'accountable knowledge',¹⁹⁵. Although I would identify with this position, it represents a certain feminist ideal, and is definitely not easy to achieve.

In the name of this feminist ethical commitment to self-reflexivity, I do engage with the data from an interested perspective, and do believe in the need to make the researcher accountable for her choices. For me, this is not a question of objectivism or subjectivism but a question of strong engagement with the texts (their production, content and interpretation), thus a question of reflexivity in relation to one's material and one's motivation for carrying out the research.

Most importantly, as has been pointed out by Smith, we have to speak from within the practices that constitute us:

Central to this approach is the positioning of the inquirer in the actualities of her local everyday/everynight world, the same world in which this text is written and read, and the same world in which the discourse of femininity is brought into being as actual practices. (...) We can only know society as insiders, regardless of the sociological artifices constructing social systems and structures external to the knowing subject¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ See especially Harding 65,69, of equal importance here is Haraway's concept of 'situated knowledges', 253-254.

¹⁹⁵ Hennessy calls this knowledge project 'materialist feminist' or 'critical cultural studies' which are capable to produce 'global analytic'. This approach takes materiality of discourses and practices into account, and it is not totalising, even if it deals with social totalities: Hennessy, 11,16.

¹⁹⁶ Dorothy Smith, 'Femininity as Discourse' in Dorothy Smith, *Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 164.

As a woman, the researcher is never outside of these constructions of femininity, or outside the discursive struggle over it. In this respect, my own position in analysing the emerging feminist and anti-feminist discourse in the Polish political sphere is definitely interested as I am undertaking the research to disclose any hegemonic positions of power engaged in defining women in particular ways (me being one of them). Similarly, I want to provide a reflexive criticism of the feminist response to exclusionary practices, in order to add to the production and possible effectiveness of resisting practices with which I identify and in which I participate as a feminist, within and out of academic context.

However, I believe that as a researcher, one is both an insider of a particular practice and an outsider to the extent that she is reflecting on that practice despite being constituted by it. I definitely engage in my analysis of discourse from the position of someone who had been affected and structured by this discourse while also beyond it at the same time. I privileged enough to see and occupy other subject positions, such as an academic, a person currently living abroad and therefore not so constrained by the Polish public sphere discourse and having many available identities that go beyond that discourse. I definitely am a member of the academic community situated outside of Poland, and I am also a member of various politically motivated feminist groups, both academic and activist, in and out of Poland. Therefore, I am speaking out of partial identification (in the sense of positioning myself rather than actually being in exactly the same position) with the developing feminist discourse in Poland.

Moreover, I am looking at the hegemonic discourse from the position of someone who has been to some extent constituted by its effects but is primarily concerned with undermining its power through the critical analysis of it.

3.5 *The methodological approach*

Within critical approaches to language I have found several, often overlapping, approaches that can be helpful in finding the analytical tools that correspond closely to my interests. First of all, my approach originated from an interest in feminist linguistics, or gender and language research.

While most of what is usually labelled 'feminist linguistics' deals with the issue of sexism in language and with the possibilities of critically assessing and changing linguistic practice, I am trying to research whether particular power struggles related to gender might be analysed in social communication in terms of a more discursive understanding of interaction. Although, starting with Foucault, power has been theorised in various social scientific theories, it is feminist linguistic and language and gender research (now affiliated with discourse theory) that has provided more 'tangible' analytical categories with which it might be possible to research the actual textual effects of this power beyond its often decontextualised theorisations. Thus, I see my project as feminist linguistics in as much as it tries to find categories of analysis suitable to researching power in discourse in relation to women.

This approach is shared by critical linguistics¹⁹⁷ especially in that it is concerned with studying what Hodge and Kress term 'gender systems in language', understood as 'not simply the product of individual texts but rather part of larger-scale social processes'.¹⁹⁸ Mills' own scholarship, which she calls feminist stylistics, is also relevant here as it is concerned with the study of gender systems in texts, especially since she does not separate the study of literary texts from other forms of social semiosis.¹⁹⁹ I believe my research is to a large extent compatible with questions of 'discourse sociolinguistics' as defined by Wodak:

[W]hat exactly are 'disorders of discourse' and how can they be identified in a given context? How are those in power able to linguistically predominate and thereby continually reproduce power relations? Do those who are disadvantaged have any chance of successfully asserting themselves? Which related disciplines, which sociological concepts, for example, are appropriate for delineating the macro-context, such as hospital? To what extent does the specific discourse (institutional, media, etc.) determine the methods and tools of analysis?²⁰⁰

As Wodak states, this approach marks an interdisciplinary turn in sociolinguistics, in particular the convergence of sociolinguistics and discourse theory, as well as the employment of other social sciences in order to explore, rather than take for granted, the social context of any human interaction.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ See, for example the discussion of critical linguistics in Sara Mills, *Feminist Stylistics* (London and New York: Routledge: 1995), 10-14.

¹⁹⁸ Hodge and Kress, cited in Mills, 11. See also Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 64-68.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁰⁰ Ruth Wodak, *The Disorders of Discourse* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 6.

The convergence of these feminist and critical perspectives can, in my view, be taken furthest within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Moreover, for my study of discourse, the insights of CDA are vital as they stress intertextuality and interdiscursivity of texts and interactions:

The analysis of discourse proper (a particular discourse) is simultaneously oriented to structure and interaction - to the social resource (orders of discourse) which enables and constrains interaction, and to the way that resource is interactively worked, i.e. to interdiscourse and its realisation in language and other semiotics.²⁰²

It is this interdiscursivity/intertextuality that allows us to explore both the process of discourse construction and the produced texts of discourse by pointing out how available texts/discourses are being reworked. For the purpose of my research, the main question is to find categories of analysis that will demonstrate these aspects of discourse in the material I am studying.

3.6 *The research questions*

My engagement with the theory on discourse as social practice and my reading of the existing conceptualisations of the discourses on women in the Polish public sphere have lead me to ask two general questions:

²⁰¹ Ibid., 6.

²⁰² Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 63.

1. *What insights can we provide into the mechanisms of power operating within and between discourses on women in Poland?*
2. *To what degree does feminist discourse enter institutional discourse on politics and does it oppose the dominant discourse effectively?*

These initial general questions have lead me to formulate more detailed research questions for this thesis:

R.Q.1 How can the effects of power struggle be captured in the construction of discourses on women in the political debates? In other words, what are the ideological investments of the competing discourses on women in the Polish public sphere?

- *R.Q.1.1 How is the construction of dominant ideology and exclusion of other theories of the social, the corresponding subject positions, social relations of women and men achieved in the Polish political discourse?*
- *R.Q.1.2 How does the counter-discourse negotiate the meanings of femininity in this context? That is, what are the alternative constructions of femininity that are put forward as less- exclusionary discourses on women?*

R.Q. 2 How can the power struggle between the two discourses on women be captured in the course of a political debate? In other words, how can the interaction of different subject positions either secure or subvert domination?

- *R.Q.2.1 How, on the level of interaction does the dominant discourse exclude the counter-discourse or dominate the process of constructing the meanings of femininity?*
- *R.Q.2.2 How does the counter-discourse resist and subvert the domination in order to open space for the negotiation of the meanings of femininity?*

The analysis that I intend to undertake is meant to provide some insight into these mechanisms, and to open up space for exploration rather than give any definite answer. But in order for the analysis to be successful, the main analytical categories have to be chosen in such a way as to provide the best tools to shed light on the workings and the effects of power in discourse; the two main concerns implied in the research questions. I will argue that the analysis of **discourse as text** and **discourse as a process/practice** are both a necessary lens for highlighting the workings/effects of power in discourse. This distinction between text and process follows from the dialectic understanding of discourse as a social practice (process) and as a representation of this practice (text), which I discussed earlier.

Therefore, I will utilise the 'lens' of discourse as text, in order to provide some answer to R.Q.1. In order to do this, I will concentrate on some text-related categories of analysis, rather than present an extensive textual analysis of my material. On the other hand, I will adopt the perspective of discourse as a process/practice in order to investigate the dynamic power play that takes place in interaction. In order to investigate and provide some answers to R.Q.2, I will employ

the notion of mechanisms of domination and resistance in analysing my data of parliamentary debates. In the next two sections I show how I have arrived at these key categories of analysis.

3.7 Power in discourse as a representation: Critical Discourse Analysis approach

The first research question concerns the different ideological investments of the two discourses, which can be understood as effects of the power struggle over the dominant and alternative meanings of femininity (as part of a larger construction of the dominant vision of the social). This, in my view, demands a concentration on the discourses in question as **texts**. The distinction between discourse as text and discourse as practice is made by Fairclough, though it is acknowledged to be a purely analytical step.²⁰³ Such a perspective corresponds to my theorisation of ideology on women as a construct, though it in no way negates or undermines the way in which ideologies are always in the process of construction; that ideology becomes a construct through practice. However, for the purpose of actual analyses, we may dissect discourse into its constituting textual elements, especially when such elements are persistently used from within particular positions.

²⁰³ Fairclough, *A Social Theory of Discourse*, 73-74.

The analytical categories of CDA are especially concerned with discovering the ideological functioning of very concrete elements of text. Within the analysis of discourses on women as texts, I have decided to centre my attention on what has consistently presented itself as vital linguistic mechanisms of the struggle over meaning: **categories, frames and repertoires**. I believe these elements to be most vital because they help in maintaining a constraint on discourse summarised by Fairclough as a constrain on the **contents of discourse**, with implications for knowledge systems and beliefs.²⁰⁴ These have obvious implications for the other effects of discourse, namely for the discursive constraints of social relationships and social identities.

I find **categorisation** a necessary analytical focus, not as a cognitive process, but as a linguistic process used in the social negotiation of meaning. Thus, I understand categorisation in a way similar to David Lee's²⁰⁵ notions of classification, selection, or simply codification. According to Lee, 'coding creates reality, rather than simply reporting it' and this creation constitutes 'the imposition of structure on our raw experiences (...) [that is] closely bound up with questions of perspective'.²⁰⁶ The perspective mentioned here corresponds to what I refer to as positions characterised by ideological investments.

²⁰⁴ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 74.

²⁰⁵ David Lee, *Competing Discourses: Perspective and Ideology in Language* (London and New York: Longman, 1992), 2.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

The process of categorisation in text is most salient and indeed, most easily accessible, through the selection of vocabulary with its subsequent changes in word meaning that is being put across the well known example of a choice between 'terrorist' and 'freedom fighter' cannot be underestimated here as an example of such contentious categorisation.²⁰⁷ Instead of using the word 'vocabulary', Fairclough suggests several alternatives such as 'lexicalisation', 'signification' or simply 'wording' to denote the key linguistic process of various significations of 'reality' or 'experience' constructed in discourse.²⁰⁸ This is how I understand categorisation. Of course, categorisation is a linguistic mechanism that may be realised in a variety of ways, not just through word meaning or choice of vocabulary exclusively; it may happen through grammatical processes such as nominalisation or it may be facilitated by text cohesion.²⁰⁹

Still, the primary implication of categorisation is in putting forward the 'label' on a chunk of meaning which is to be accepted as unproblematic. The more a category is presented as common sense, the more power has been invested in its creation. Here the codification of a meaning of a category represents the ultimate legitimisation of it.²¹⁰ Yet, in most cases the meanings and the boundaries of categories need to be constantly reassessed, and there is much more ideological difference possible as the control over meanings and possible changes are being fought over. In this respect,

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 75.

²⁰⁸ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 74-75.

²⁰⁹ Nominalisation in this function is pointed out by Lee, 6; and Fairclough also discusses the ideological categorising effect of nominalisation and presents an example of text cohesion in conflating categories in *Language and Power*, 50, 97.

²¹⁰ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 92-93.

analytical attention should not so much be centred on the choice of category itself, but on the use to which a category is put in the process of discursive practice, for example in how it helps in building an argument, and, following from it, a coherent world view:

One focus for analysis is upon alternative wordings and their political and ideological significance, upon such issues as how domains of experience may be 'reworded', as part of social and political struggles (...). Another focus is word meaning, and particularly how the meanings of words come into contention within wider struggles: I shall suggest that particular structurings between the relationships between words and the relationships between the meaning of the words are forms of hegemony.²¹¹

I am interested in highlighting this process of rewording employed in order to reproduce as well as resist the dominant notions of femininity in social life.

One feminist linguistic text, which makes this connection between categories and the exercise of power in discourse, is Susan Ehrlich's²¹² article on how sexism is discursively performed. In describing the treatment of feminist categories such as 'date rape' or 'sexual harassment', she points to some mechanisms by which the meaning of these terms is denied, trivialised or changed by writers. The strategies enumerated by her include:

²¹¹ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 77.

²¹² Susan Ehrlich, 'Critical Linguistics as Feminist Methodology' in Sandra Burt and Lorraine Code (eds) *Changing Methods: Feminists Transforming Practice* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995)

1. The elimination or obscuring of aspects of a term's definition, or redefining prototypical case. The ensuing construct manages to depoliticise the initial meaning.
2. Expanding the category so that it comprises 'phenomena beyond reason'. This results in trivialisation.
3. Complete obliteration of a term's referent, which is considered here as a 'violent form of redefinition'.²¹³

Another important, and not unconnected analytical category is that of **frames**, which I see as corresponding to discourses in the sense of particular narratives or stories about the world. Chouliaraki and Fairclough describe frames as 'the sort of language used to construct some aspect of reality from a particular perspective, for example the liberal discourse on politics'.²¹⁴ I also decided to use frames rather than discourses as my analytical category to preserve the distinction between the general meaning of discourse and the particular sub-discourses (narratives, frames).

The analytical category of frame is used by Fairclough in analysing an excerpt from a romance novel in relation to constructions of femininity, where frames are understood as 'accounts of what women are and do'.²¹⁵ One such frame describes women as 'independent persons' while the other as 'traditional subservient' women.

²¹³ Ibid., 54-58.

²¹⁴ Fairclough and Chouliaraki., 63.

²¹⁵ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 80.

This example is particularly relevant as I discuss opposing constructions of femininity, which are also the subject of my analysis.

It seems to me that frames function like categories as they are central in creating a particular worldview, but by using whole narratives rather than single elements of language. The building of narratives that seem coherent versions of reality is particularly important in the building of social theories of gender. Of course, in this sense they are triggered by single elements that are put forward and that correspond to larger structure of meaning.

There is one more analytical category that is vital in putting forward social meanings through discourse. Lia Litosseliti uses the notion of interpretive repertoires, which are 'similar to discourses in their broader sense', that is as cultural themes that are evoked in discourse for the purpose of presenting a coherent worldview in particular texts or in actual arguments made in texts.²¹⁶ Repertoires allow for evoking different moral and gendered standpoints in argumentation by 'favouring one rhetorical rule over another'.²¹⁷ In this meaning, repertoires are 'interpretive frames' that function like discourses in describing 'entities or worlds consisting of words, acts, behaviours, assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and values that we all, as speakers, writers and readers

²¹⁶ Litosseliti Lia, *Moral Repertoires and Gender Voices in Argumentation* PhD thesis, Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language, Lancaster University, 1999, electronic version, no page numbers.

²¹⁷ Litosseliti Lia, 'Head to Head': Gendered Repertoires in Newspaper Arguments' in Litosseliti, Lia and Jane Sunderland (eds) *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 129.

evoke in our speaking, writing and reading.²¹⁸ Though, it must be noted that repertoires can be understood as superordinate to discourses (frames), in the sense that they make various discourses possible; for example various discourses on marriage or relationships may be constructed through resorting to a repertoire of individual versus collective values.²¹⁹ In this way, repertoires help pre-select frames and categories, and make them into a 'logical' whole that can be constituted from within a particular perspective.

Thus, the previously mentioned example from a romance novel could be analysed within a slightly more abstract repertoire: 'independence versus dependence', where we have two types of meaning themes that can be applied to various arguments, not only about what women are, but also in relation to children, employees, etc. It is, of course, very important to note how such a repertoire is so often used in relation to women, and what contradictory frames it makes possible. I will divide frames and repertoires for the purpose of my analysis, while I am in no way going to resolve all the theoretical implications of such a division.

In my view, the category of repertoires is particularly important in linking to what Fairclough refers to as 'commonsense assumptions and expectations of the interpreter'²²⁰ that people use to interpret texts. That is the why Litosseliti claims that

²¹⁸ Ibid.,

²¹⁹ Ibid.,

²²⁰ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 78.

'repertoires belong to society rather than to individual speakers'.²²¹ However, the choice of which repertoire to evoke or use as central in an utterance is one way in which speakers try to push forward a particular interpretation consistent with a particular perspective or position in discourse and informed by particular ideological investment. Categories and frames are also used by the originators of texts to further assign or restrict certain interpretations: 'The sense of coherence of a whole text is generated in a sort of chemical reaction which you get when you put together what's in the text and what's already 'in' the interpreter - that is the common-sense assumptions and expectations of the interpreter.'²²²

All of these choices are interpretive as they are used in building a particular perspective or a position within discourse. More than that, such choices may also function as 'weapons' in the discursive contestation over meaning. This may mean either an **imposition** of a model of interpretation or a **negotiation** of meaning. This vital differentiation between 'imposition' and 'negotiation' of modes of interpretation is made by David Lee.²²³ The latter provides an insight into potentially transformative moments in discourse, while the former corresponds to the maintenance of a hegemonic discourse. I find this to be a vital distinction for the purpose of differentiating between the meanings of the dominant and counter-discourse in my own material. While the hegemonic or dominant discourse will use categories, discourses and repertoires to impose and maintain dominant meanings,

²²¹ Litosseliti, *Moral Repertoires and Gender Voices in Argumentation*

²²² Ibid., 79.

²²³ The distinction is made in relation to categorisation and selection, Lee, 21.

other, subdominant discourses will try to negotiate with and possibly transform the dominant meanings.

3.8 Power in discourse as a process: feminist linguistic approach

Since discourse is also a process of social interaction, studying particular discursive situations should allow us to capture the workings of power 'in action'. The notion of discursive power I adopt implies concrete mechanisms by which this power is executed. These mechanisms have been theorised by feminist linguists and can be summarised as 'mechanisms of domination and resistance'. Thus, I am interested, whether (and in what ways) power can be seen to function in relation to the discourses on women.

In relation to domination on the level of public discourse or general social interaction, the recent work of Robin Lakoff lists the following strategies of domination of women's discourses:

- interruption and topic control,
- nonresponse
- interpretive control²²⁴

²²⁴ Robin Lakoff, 'Cries and Whispers: The Shattering of the Silence' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 29

Though these mechanisms are theorised in relation to verbal interaction, Lakoff's material (specific public sphere events) approximates the wider discursive understanding of social interaction. However, the last one may be seen as the basis of domination in any cultural communication: it is the appropriation and control of meaning. In my understanding, interpretive control may include all mechanisms of domination in discourse, including those working on textual level.

The mechanisms of domination can also be subsumed under the general term: silencing. This term was used in a similar way by Cameron,²²⁵ although for her it referred to communication, in the strict linguistic sense, as face-to-face interaction. Silencing denotes 'a personal experience of being "silenced" (interrupted, ignored, not called to speak, not confident enough to speak).'²²⁶

Interestingly enough, similar strategies of domination have been analysed in supposedly 'gender-neutral' electronic interaction. Susan Herring, Deborah A. Johnson, and Tamara DiBenedetto analysed two discussions on the Internet, which showed characteristics that are, according to them, similar to female participation in other public discourse areas.²²⁷ What the authors noticed was both the asymmetry of male and female contributions and the silencing techniques used in response to topics adopting a 'feminist' perspective, or even voicing a complaint of sexism:

²²⁵ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 201.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Susan Herring, Deborah A. Johnson, and Tamara DiBenedetto, 'This Discussion is Going too Far: Male Resistance to Female Participation on the Internet' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 67.

Male members reacted in each case by employing a variety of silencing strategies: first they avoided addressing the women's concerns by dismissing them as trivial or by intellectualising the discussion away from its original focus; then they erupted into anger and accusations when women persisted in posting messages on the topic; and finally they co-opted and redefined the terms of the discourse as a means of regaining control.²²⁸

This study is important for my work as it pinpoints concrete strategies of domination and because it also researches the corresponding strategies of resistance, called here **strategies of empowerment** on the part of the women. The primary achievement of the women involved was breaking the silence and introducing the problems centred on women's experience into the discussion. **Persistence of focus** on these meanings as well as 'solidarity' or '**persistence of perspective**' across individuals' was also noted²²⁹. The most important of them, and the most general one, was simply the **awareness** of precisely the strategies of domination used by some male participants, and then **naming** them publicly for what they were²³⁰.

This insight is important for my analysis of discourse in the public sphere, as it is concerned with a dynamic understanding of power in interaction where mechanisms of domination are answered by corresponding mechanisms of resistance. The authors have analysed discourses where domination is at work, and they have tried to assess the extent to which resistance is successful in the particular contexts. This work

²²⁸ Ibid., 68.

²²⁹ Ibid., 90.

²³⁰ Ibid., 91.

became a general model for my approach as it correspond to my perspective on the dynamic workings of power, suggesting also concrete discursive mechanisms to consider in my material.

What is interesting is that it was a 'feminist discourse' that was being dominated. Similarly, I am interested in seeing the power struggle between discursive positions, rather than between male and female speakers. I will use similar mechanisms in the analysis of a discursive situation involving both men and women representing distinct discourses on women. In this understanding, the feminist discourse can, at least to a degree, be used by male speakers who identify with such a position while some women may identify with what I have called a 'hegemonic' or 'dominant' discourse on women.

The mechanisms of domination most important for the purpose of my analysis are:

- Exclusion and nonresponse: lack of discussion on some argument or contribution or lack of an answer to a point raised. This seems to be the most direct assertion of power in interaction or in discourse.
- Depreciating, diminishing, trivialisation: through jokes, negative evaluations, irony, insults etc. This mechanism silences through undermining the position or the speaker.

- Co-opting of discourse: silencing as position by appropriating part of a discourse content for one's own position, probably the most subtle mechanism of interpretive control.

On the other hand, we need to be able to account for the possible **mechanisms of resistance**, that would correspond to subverting the dominant interpretations and aim at a negotiation of meaning between the different position. If we adopt the view that **strategies of resistance** are always answers to **strategies of domination**, we should be able to see the following mechanisms at work:

- As an answer to exclusion/ nonresponse - a persistence of focus or a persistence of perspective: systematic bringing up of a topic, insisting on some discursive position that is being excluded.
- As an answer to diminishing, trivialisation- insisting on the seriousness of the discourse, pointing out of the above strategies, possibly counter-diminishing of the dominant discourse.
- As an answer to co-optation - reclaiming the discursive position/contribution and pointing out co-optation.

In my view, the feminist linguistic theorisation of power in communication can also be used for the purpose of discourse analysis, when we analyse discourse as a form of social interaction. In the case of my material, the discourses I will analyse all originated in actual verbal interactions. I believe that by concentrating on key

mechanisms of domination and resistance between discursive positions we may provide an insight into the dynamic workings of power within the understanding of discourse as a process, and as social interaction. This should provide an analytical framework allowing me to answer the second research question, formulated in section 3.6, in relation to the two discourses on women in the chosen parliamentary debates.

CHAPTER 4

An analysis of discourse as a construct: categories, frames and repertoires forming discourses on women in Polish parliamentary debates

The possibility of resistance is an effect of the processes whereby particular discourses become the instruments and effects of power.²³¹

4.1 *The analytical perspective*

In this chapter I utilise the perspective of discourse as a construct, that is, textual representation of reality, in order to analyse the content of two distinct discourses on women that are constructed through parliamentary debates. The purpose of this is to provide an answer to Research Question 1: What are the ideological investments of the competing discourses on women in the Polish political sphere? In my view, concentrating on textual elements providing the content of the discourses on women, such as categories, frames and repertoires would allow us to give an answer to this question. The analysis of categorisation, frames and repertoires can describe the

ideational/propositional content of the texts studied. Consequently, we should be able to locate the representations constructed through the studied texts within differentiated networks of values and expose the ideological investment into the construction of women implied in particular representations.

4.2 Introduction of the debates

Initially, my analysis had included several parliamentary debates. The debates studied come from the same parliamentary cycle (1997-2001), and concern topics related to women. I had looked at the following debates in chronological order:

1. Equal status debate (on gender equality bill): 04 March 1999
2. Equal status debate (on a parliamentary commission on equality): 03 November 1999
3. Debate on the penalisation of pornography: 14 December 1999
4. Debate on the annual report on the implementation of anti-abortion bill (for the year 1998): 14 April 2000
5. Debate on the Polish delegation at the UN Conference on Women (New York, June 2000): 29 June 2000
6. Debate on the extension of maternity leave: 11 January 2001
7. Debate on the annual report on the implementation of anti-abortion bill (for the year 1999): 18 January, 2001

²³¹ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 107.

The insights generated from these analyses are very much part of my research project, even though not all of them could be included in this thesis. I have deliberately decided to include an earlier and a more recent debate in this chapter, in order to provide a set of textual material on the basis of which to make some generalisations about persistent meanings that are generated in the political discourse on women. I have chosen the first of the 'equal status debates' and 'the maternity leave debate' for that purpose. Both of these debates are at the very core of the negotiation of femininity and possible changes in the discursive construction of women.

The equal status debate, which took place in March 1999, provides material for the most explicit questions about how women are understood in relation to rights, discrimination, and citizenship from within the two discourses. It is also one of the few attempts to propose gender equality legislation, coming from some left-wing and centre MPs (and particularly from the Parliamentary Women's Group).²³² The maternity leave debate (January 2001), concerns another key aspect of the construction of femininity: motherhood, and it originates in the right-wing political parties. I will attempt to show through my analysis that the two debates, which occurred at different times, essentially construct the same discourses on women. The

²³² In fact two debates 'on equal status of men and women' took place in 1999, one considering the possibility of a gender equality legislation, and the second one concerning the creation of a parliamentary commission on equal status. Both of the proposals were rejected, but the debates have been widely discussed in feminist circles in Poland, in the understanding that they were they key to the possibility of change in women's situation in Poland.

initial division of the two discursive positions is based simply on a particular speaker's voiced attitude towards a particular proposal (for or against). The Polish texts are given, but the analysis is carried out in English. Indeed, for most of my analytical tools, namely the categories, frames, and repertoires the English translation manages to capture the original meaning well. Where there are important differences in categorisation, implied by the Polish text, this is also discussed.

4.3 The analysis

4.3.1 The equal status debates: 'equality as an international obligation' and 'women's rights as human rights'

First, I shall analyse the construction of the discourse on women coming from the proponents of the legislation on equal status, and a section of the introductory speech in the debate will serve this purpose here:

(1a) MP Teresa Jaształ:

(...) Społeczność międzynarodowa dostrzegła również, że we wszystkich społeczeństwach w mniejszym lub większym stopniu kobiety należą do grup szczególnie upośledzonych. W 1979 r. została przyjęta konwencja w sprawie likwidacji wszelkich form dyskryminacji kobiet, ratyfikowana przez Polskę w roku 1980. Konwencja zawiera m.in. definicję dyskryminacji kobiet i zobowiązuje rządy do przeciwdziałania nierównościom ze względu na płeć we wszystkich sferach życia - zarówno publicznego, jak i prywatnego. (...)

(...) The international community also noticed that in all societies women, to a larger or smaller degree, belong to particularly disadvantaged groups. In 1979 a convention on the abolition of all forms of women's discrimination was adopted [by the UN], and was ratified by Poland in 1980. The convention includes, among other things, a definition of women's discrimination and obliges the governments [of the signatory countries] to counteract the inequalities of gender in all spheres of life - public as well as private. (...)

The first extract is important as it introduces the key discourse used throughout both debates: *'the discourse on international obligations'*, referring to signed legal documents that provide an interdiscursive resource for legitimising claims for this argumentative position. In connection with this, the examples of 'other countries' are also implied (belonging in the 'international community'), and especially those of the European Union. This choice immediately brings into the debate the *'frame of European integration of Poland'* and allows to further legitimise the argument that equality legislature is important. This theme utilised as a source of argument provides space for the construction of important categories, such as *'inequality'* and *'discrimination'*.

But using these particular categories as part of an argumentation depends also on larger meaning structures, such as the repertoires used. Here, this refers to the way Poland is categorised as a political entity. The choice is between POLAND AS AN INDEPENDENT - VERSUS A DEPENDENT ENTITY. In other words, the choice is between the treatment of Poland as a self-sufficient whole, which presupposes *'the*

frame of the nation state', or *'Poland as a part of Europe'*, (the international community discourse), dependent on other countries and international structures. In the second understanding, the internal social policy ceases to be internal, especially in the context of the expected and desired political integration (with the European Union). This also means that **civic** rather than **national** categorisation of women is presupposed: only as **citizens** can women demand equality with men *in all spheres of life - public as well as private*. This may be less feasible if the nation state frame is used, where woman is charged with special duties of symbolising and preserving national identity that make her a Pole in a different way than a man is, making demands of equal treatment at least partially incoherent.

The next extract, from the same speech, introduces other key categories taken from *the feminist frame* that structure the proposed way women are to be seen:

(1.b)

(...)Uznawanie przez większość społeczeństw sfery prywatnej za domenę kobiet, a sfery publicznej za domenę mężczyzn sprawiło, że dopiero w latach dziewięćdziesiątych dostrzeżono przemoc w rodzinie i uznano za poważny problem społeczny, a także łamanie praw człowieka. Źródłem przemocy w rodzinie jest zakorzeniony we wszystkich społecznościach patriarchalnych nierówny status kobiet i mężczyzn.(...)

(...) *Considering, in most societies, the private sphere as a women's domain and the public sphere as men's domain has caused the violence in the family to be acknowledged as a social problem, and as violation of human rights only in the nineties. The source of violence in the family is the unequal status of women and men rooted in all patriarchal societies. (...)*

It should be noted that, the choice of POLAND AS A DEPENDENT ENTITY within the repertoire mentioned above is still used here in order to make the criticism of the Polish society possible in relation to 'most societies'. Then, the introduction of categories: '**private sphere**', '**public sphere**', '**violence in the family**', '**human rights**', '**unequal status**' makes sense as part of the criticism of the situation of women in a global feminist understanding: 'in all patriarchal societies'. There are two main frames used in the first two sentences: that of **international human rights** and of **feminist critiques of society**. The first one allows for the introduction of the category of human rights, and the second for that of 'patriarchal societies', and 'unequal status'. When brought together they allow for the formation of the frame of **women's rights as human rights**. The above-mentioned repertoire of international dependence and interconnection makes it possible to apply these debates for the purpose of arguing for the necessity of legislation on equal status.

It is interesting to see how the feminist frame is further used in this debate to redefine the dominant understanding of the social and of women's position within it:

(2) MP Danuta Waniek:

(...) Generalnie jednak zrównanie statusu kobiet i mężczyzn nie tylko w konstytucji i ustawach, ale przede wszystkim w naszej obyczajowości, służy kobietom, a przez to całemu społeczeństwu. I niezależnie od tego, co się dzisiaj z różnych trybun i ambon mówi na temat "feminizmu", a w ustach polityków prawicowych brzmi to najczęściej jak obelga, prawda polega na tym, że kobiety współczesne, również te o poglądach prawicowych, korzystają z efektów wytrwałej i często

desperackiej walki tych nie lubianych przez nich feministek - lub, inaczej, sufrażystek czy emancypantek - w rodzaju Emeliny Pankhurst, dzięki którym kobiety stały się obywatelkami, uzyskując po I wojnie światowej prawa wyborcze. To ona właśnie krzyknęła na początku naszego wieku: "Kobiety i mężczyźni - nacieramy na Izbę Gmin!" (...)

(...) *In general however, the equalising of the status of men and women not only in the constitution and codes but primarily in our mentality serves women, and because of that serves the whole society. And, regardless of what is being said today from various rostrums and pulpits on the subject of 'feminism', and coming from the lips of right-wing politicians it usually sounds like an insult, the truth is that contemporary women, also those with rightist views, benefit from the effect of persistent and often desperate fight of those disliked feminists - or in, different words, suffragists, or emancipationists - of the kind of Emily Pankhurst, thanks to whom women became citizens, gaining after the first world war voting rights. It was her who shouted at the beginning of our century: Women and men- let's charge the House of Commons'. (...)*

In this extract, the feminist discourse is accredited as a source, or a foundation, which the authors of the bill use to support their argument. The open assertion that the bill is to contribute to 'equalising of the status of men and women' and especially the support offered for this statement: [because it] *serves women, and because of that serves the whole society*, may be seen as using a **radical feminist frame**. However, because the collective is here categorised as '**society**', the statement again establishes the category of women as **citizens** in exactly the same way as men, hence the 'equalising of men and women' can be later categorised as 'a necessity'. Feminist activism is acknowledged here as a source of history for the struggle for women's rights, and this implies the identification of the authors of the bill as the 'followers'

of earlier liberal feminists: 'suffragists' and 'emancipationists' are established as predecessors of 'feminists'. The evoked appeal of Emily Pankhurst to *charge the House of Commons* is meant to provide the discursive situation with a historical significance as another 'charge' of the parliament, this time the Polish one.

But the invocation of the history of women's movements also provides a way to criticise the dominant discourse on grounds of accountability. The discourse is first only alluded to indirectly '*regardless of what is being said today from various rostrums and pulpits on the subject of 'feminism'*', where the rostrum metonymically represents political institutions, while the pulpit evokes the Church. Then, a more direct accusation is levelled at right-wing politicians: *and coming from the lips of right-wing politicians it usually sounds like an insult*. The speaker is here criticising the dominant discourse and its base of legitimacy, and the criticism is then further directed at conservative female politicians, identified as 'the women who benefit from the effects of feminists' fight²³³. Yet, it can also be understood in relation the whole dominant discourse, as exposing its ideological investment. The conservative construction of women is exposed as having little to do with the 'lives' of even those women that are champions of such views. What is implied here is the awareness of the unitary vision of femininity in the conservative discourse that in no way matches the experiences of women.

²³³ This is a very widespread criticism occurring in these debates in several different forms

Interestingly, the feminist frame is not only used as a source for emancipation, arguably, it is also occasionally denied legitimacy within this position:

(3) MP Anna Bankowska

(...) Niektórzy próbowali wmawiać nam, inicjatorom tej ustawy, że ta ustawa to wyraz tylko i wyłącznie feministycznych pomysłów. Nic bardziej błędnego. To walka z bezprawiem, to walka o to, żeby standardy europejskie zaczęły funkcjonować w naszym kraju. Faktycznie wzbudziła ona, jak dowodzi życie, większe zainteresowanie wśród kobiet zasiadających w tym parlamencie, i to szczególnie po lewej stronie sali. Można się zastanowić dlaczego. Czy może jest to wyraz lęku przed utratą rzeczywistych praw zdobytych i zakorzenionych w mentalności mężczyzn? Padło w dyskusji wiele niesprawiedliwych i nieprawdziwych zarzutów pod adresem tej ustawy, a ona nie wywyższa żadnej z płci, lecz wyłącznie gwarantuje równość praw, i to głównie w odniesieniu do pracy i godności osobistej. Czy to tak wiele? Czy w demokratycznym państwie prawa oczekiwanie na równy status kobiety i mężczyzny to fanaberia czy konieczność? Na pewno konieczność. Na potrzebę uchwalenia ustawy wskazuje życie przepełnione przykładami najczęściej - podkreślam słowo: najczęściej, bo nie tylko - słabszej pozycji kobiety w wielu dziedzinach naszego życia codziennego. Kto tego nie widzi, kto tego nie słyszy, jest ślepy i głuchy na krzywdę ludzką.(...)

(...) Some have tried to tell us, the initiators of the bill, that this bill is just and only an expression of feminist ideas. Nothing is more wrong. It is a fight for the European standards to start functioning in our country. Indeed, as life shows, it [the bill] has aroused bigger interest among the women sitting in this parliament, and especially on the left side of the chamber. One could wonder why. Can it be an expression of fear of losing real rights won and rooted in men's mentality? In the discussion, numerous unjust and false accusations directed at this bill were thrown, but it [the bill] does not extol one of the sexes, but only guarantees the equality of rights, and that especially in relation to work and personal dignity. Is this so much? Is the expectation of equal status of the man and woman in a democratic state of law a whim or a necessity? Definitely a necessity. The need to

vote [the bill] is pointed out by life filled with examples of usually-I stress usually, but not only-weaker position of woman in many domains of our everyday life. Who does not see it, who does not hear it is blind and deaf to human misery.(...)

It is interesting to note that in this excerpt the speaker strategically moves away from the feminist interpretations, to stress the *liberal and international frames* which indeed provide the main basis for this debate. But by using the category 'fight' (which in previous excerpt referred directly to feminists) the *feminist discourse* is still alluded to, even if now the base of legitimising the argument is '*the frame of international obligations and frame of European integration*' and '*international human rights*': *a fight for the European standards to start functioning in our country*. Furthermore, the liberal category of 'right' and 'equality' are joined to form a category '*the equality of rights*', which is seen as a goal of the bill: *the equality of rights, and that especially in relation to work and personal dignity*.

The problematisation of opposition to this goal is achieved by the use of rhetorical questions: *Is this so much? Is the expectation of equal status of the man and woman in a democratic state of law a whim or a necessity?* At the same time the feminist frame, though seemingly undermined, reappears in theorising the lack of male politicians' interests: *Can it be an expression of fear of losing real rights won and rooted in men's mentality?* This rhetorical question would not be possible without *the feminist frame of society as patriarchy*, with its negative assessment. Of course,

the criticism is not very strong: the implied meaning was probably not lack of interest of male politicians, but lack of acceptance for the bill.

Further on, a set of questions reasserts the liberal frame: *the frame of society as democracy*. In referring to 'democratic state of law', the legitimacy for the voting of the bill is asserted. Moreover, the action of voting the bill is categorised as a 'necessity', which is another categorisation of what earlier was referred to as 'fight'. These two categorisations make sense when used within the liberal democratic and feminist frames respectively, and we can see how the speaker is trying to combine the two into a meaningful whole. The two frames, with their categorisations of 'women's rights', are also joined within the two final sentences, which appeal to experience - 'everyday life', as a source of knowledge of the discrimination of women, but also, occasionally, of men too.

In this way, the key argument of the whole debate is upheld: opposing the more widespread discrimination against women, does not discriminate against men, but serves the whole society. However, first and foremost, the key categorisation of 'women's rights as human rights' is established here. The category of 'human suffering', when read against 'the weaker position of women', or, in other words, discrimination, constructs this understanding, endowing it with moral dimensions: those who oppose the bill are 'blind and deaf to human suffering', which implies that their actions must be negatively assessed. In this way, the counter-discourse is also providing inroads into the dominant discourse's monopolising of morality, which in

the case of the Polish sphere has occurred through the excessive use of religious discourse in the political language (originating in and revolving around abortion debate and the resulting discourse). Here, an alternative notion of what is (im)moral is being constructed.

We can see from the above few extracts that the meanings of this discourse are not stable. On the contrary, they are taken from several frames for the purpose of building a particular argument. The speakers move between various themes and categorisations to construct their arguments. All these arguments, however, constitute a meaningful, though internally differentiated whole: an understanding of society where women are to be considered citizens with equal rights. Another way of binding these categorisations and frames is to make them correspond to the formulation of POLAND AS A DEPENDENT ENTITY, within the appropriate repertoire, which covers both the *frame of international obligations* and the *international feminist frame*, therefore constructing women's rights as not nation-dependent but internationally established. In this way, a repertoire provides the binding elements for the various frames and categories used, all for the purpose of describing women as a social group and not a biological or national category. Below, I present the results of this part of my analysis in the form of a table:

Examples	Repertoires	Categories	Frames	Argument
1	Poland as a DEPENDENT (VS INDEPENDENT) ENTITY (European reference)	inequality disadvantage discrimination society society, international community unequal status human rights public and private patriarchy family violence	'international law', 'European Integration' 'human rights (justice)' 'feminist critique of society' women's rights as human rights	legislation on equal status is internationally recognised and necessary in Poland
2	Poland as a DEPENDENT (VS INDEPENDENT) ENTITY (European reference)	women and society feminism voting (political) rights	'feminist frame', 'history of feminism'	legalisation on equal status serves men and women
3	Poland as a DEPENDENT (VS INDEPENDENT) ENTITY (European reference)	fight, necessity men's rights equality of rights, equal status patriarchy, democracy, women's rights as human rights human suffering	'international obligations', 'European Integration' 'human rights' 'society as democracy' on society as 'society as patriarchy' 'morality'	opposing discrimination serves the whole society

Table 1 The equal status debate, position 1

The notion of femininity constructed here stresses the categorisation of equality of women rather than the notion of women's inherent difference. The social, not the national frame of reference in categorising women is preferred, as is the categorisation of woman as citizen. We can see that this discourse establishes itself as possessing a high degree of legitimacy and power of demanding change in the dominant construction of women, even though all of the proposed arguments fail in this institutional context. What is most interesting to observe is the ability with which discourses on feminism, and on international politics are reworked and rejoined to construct a newer understanding of gender relations and to legitimise the argumentation which demand change: the introduction of the gender equality legislation.

4.3.2 The equal status debate: 'equality in difference': 'women's rights as natural rights'

Below, I present the reassertion of the meaning of femininity that is meant to stir the debate away from the discourses, categories and frames offered by the proponents of the bill, and to reassert the exclusionary discourse on women. Even while engaging in the debate in the 'technical' sense of taking turns, the dominant discourse

arguments are centred around preventing any negotiation of meaning by proposing an irreconcilable version of the 'appropriate femininity'. The first and one of the most important categorisations used by several speakers is that of 'women's rights' as 'natural rights'.

(4a) MPBarbara Frączek:

(...) Tezę wyjściową jest rzekome nieposzanowanie praw kobiet w naszym kraju, praw, które gwarantuje Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w art. 33, praw, które gwarantują liczne dokumenty międzynarodowe, wreszcie praw naturalnych, praw niespisanych, które wskazują każdemu człowiekowi jego obowiązki i prawa, jeśli człowiek chce zachowywać się godnie - jak człowiek.

Już starożytni Rzymianie rozróżniali prawo naturalne ius i stanowione przez ustawodawcę lex i na prawie naturalnym opierali wszystkie przepisy. Prawa naturalne człowieka nie zależą od niego, są dziedzictwem ludzkości i należą do osoby ludzkiej jako takiej. Nikt nie może ich od nowa ustanowić, nawet suwerenne zgromadzenie demokratyczne. Nikt też nie może ich zmienić, one są zastane, tak jak człowiek jest zastany, i wymagają tylko, by je respektowano. W braku ich respektowania tkwi kwintesencja rzekomej dyskryminacji kobiety. (...)

(...) The initial thesis [of the authors of the bill] is the alleged lack of respect for women's rights in our country, the rights which are guaranteed in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland in art.33, which are guaranteed by numerous international documents, finally [lack of respect] of the natural rights, the unwritten rights, which show to every human being his obligations and rights, if the person wants to behave with dignity -like a human being.

Already ancient Romans differentiated between the natural law 'ius' and the one established by the legislator- 'lex' and it was on the natural law that they based all the laws. The natural rights of a human being are independent of him, they are the heritage of humanity and they belong to a human person as such. Nobody can write them again, not even an independent democratic gathering (parliament). Nobody can change them, they are given just like a human

being is given, and they demand respecting them. In the lack of respecting of them lies the quintessence of the alleged women's discrimination. (...)

This speech, which marks the beginning of the debate and establishes the position of the hegemonic discourse, introduces the category of '**natural laws**'.²³⁴ But, before this is done, the notion of women's discrimination is first defined as '**lack of respect**' (for women's rights understood as part of natural rights) and is undermined at the same time by the use of the passive participle 'alleged'. The speaker also uses the interdiscursive resources of '**the constitution**', as well as '**international documents**', to establish what is considered an unproblematic 'reality': 'women's rights' are already 'guaranteed'. The *frame of international obligations*, utilised extensively in the previously analysed position, is here generally alluded to by the use the phrase 'international documents', though for the purpose of building the opposite argument - no further legislation is necessary. It is important to note, however, that the first document mentioned is the Constitution, thus establishing the primacy of *national frame* over the international one. Both are meant to present a simple principle: if something such as 'women's rights' is guaranteed by a legal document, it exists in reality. That is, there is either no trespassing on these rights, or it is such an abstract entity that no more beyond a suitable written 'guarantee' can be done to ensure them being respected.

²³⁴ The polish word 'prawa' can mean both 'rights' and 'laws', thus the construction of women's rights as natural rights is easily generated from within the discussion of 'laws'.

With regard to the notion of 'natural rights', the argument must be seen as proposed exclusively in relation to women's rights, for the purpose of stating that no legislation on equal status is necessary, but also for the purpose of implying the categorisation of women as **nature**. This, of course, relies on the repertoire of NATURE VERSUS CULTURE/SOCIETY. It is in this context that the breaking of laws can be seen as possible only by a select few, those that go against the 'essence of humanity', where 'unwritten rights': *show to every human being his obligations and rights, if the person wants to behave with dignity -like a human being.*

It can then be stated further where this notion of 'natural rights' stems from. It is vital, that the natural rights and the differentiation between 'ius' and 'lex' is mentioned persistently in relation to women's rights. Of course, the key argument is not about rights/laws, but about the nature of womanhood. By constructing the category of 'natural rights/laws' (Polish category of 'prawa') as 'ancient' and 'given', what is really being constructed is the 'unchangeable', and essentialist notion of femininity as part of the natural order, coherent with REPERTOIRE OF WOMAN AS NATURE VERSUS CULTURE. It is within this repertoire that the natural order precedes and overrides the social order, as *nobody can write them [the natural laws] again, not even an independent democratic gathering. Nobody can change them.* In this way, the limits of democratic rule of law are constructed in relation to women.

No negotiation of femininity is possible in this framework, because femininity is natural, essential and, for the purpose of constructing this understanding, the whole history of human civilisation is presented as stable, 'given', and 'independent' of human beings themselves. The reality is also presented as independent of historical change, hence the Roman civilisation is established as a model of the existing 'reality', not a historically specific culture. It is a social world without inequality in relation to class, race or gender, based on human 'dignity' and 'natural rights' that are 'given' by some source of power that precedes humanity. This source will later be supplied by religious discourse, as we shall see in other excerpts.

In contrast to its ahistorical presentation, this proposed construction of femininity, is compatible with the needs of the emerging capitalist relations, painstakingly constructed on the separation of the feminised private and male-dominated public sphere, with women placed outside of public life in a primordial state of nature. It is also more than compatible with **Catholic nationalist discourse**. Both can be seen as discursive resources used to supply this vision of the social in relation to women. In a later part of the same speech, the speaker supplies further meaning to this construction of femininity:

(4.b)

(...)W przededniu dyskusyjnego święta, jakim jest Dzień Kobiet, chcę przypomnieć, że prawdziwy awans społeczny kobiety wymaga przede wszystkim przywrócenia wartości macierzyństwu, małżeństwu i rodzinie. Najważniejsza i najzaszczytniejsza praca kobiety przebiega w rodzinie. Więc nie uchwalenie ustawy o równym statusie kobiety i mężczyzny, ale podjęcie prac nad ustawą

dowartościowującą pracę kobiety w rodzinie, może usatysfakcjonować większość polskich kobiet i winno być przedmiotem pracy Wysokiej Izby.

Trzeba właściwie ukierunkować predyspozycje kobiety, by pomóc się jej odrodzić i zrozumieć swoją godność, bowiem kiedy odradza się kobieta, odradza się cały naród. (...)

(...) I would like to remind you on the eve of the disputed holiday of Women's Day that the real social promotion of a woman demands first of all the re-establishment of the value of motherhood, marriage and family. The most important and the most dignified work of a woman takes place in the family. Thus, not the voting of a bill on the equal status of a man and woman but starting work on a bill that would re-evaluate the woman's work in the family, may satisfy the majority of Polish women and should be the subject of the High Chamber [the parliament].

The predispositions of the woman must be channelled in the right way, to help her become reborn and to understand her dignity, because when a woman is reborn the whole nation is reborn.

In this excerpt, all major discourses favoured by this position are evoked. The *frame of private sphere as women's sphere* is evoked by categorising women's social roles as 'motherhood', 'marriage' and 'family', and by placing women's work 'in the family'. In stressing motherhood and wifedom, and what is later referred to as 'the predispositions of the woman', both the biological and the religious definitions of women's roles are established. Finally, *the frame of women as reproducers of the nation* is utilised to provide the contextual framework for refuting the debated bill and advocating another one. The suggested bill, which 'would re-evaluate the

woman's work in the family, might be the bill on the extension of paid maternity leave.

The nationalist discourse presented here through the metaphor of 'rebirth' of the woman-nation is particularly essential in all of the arguments. This discourse relies on the **REPertoire OF POLAND AS AN INDEPENDENT VERSUS DEPENDENT ENTITY (THE NATION STATE VERSUS SOCIETY)** within which no comparison to 'international standards' makes much sense, as in this repertoire the foreign countries become the 'Other' that must remain different, that cannot be easily compared to the Polishness that is being evoked here. It is vital to note that in the Polish discourse on national identity the difference rests on women-related issues. It is precisely the traditional model of family, the ban on abortion, and the myth of 'Polish Mother' that differentiate 'the (present) Polish state' from other nations. In the process, a construction of femininity is put forward which undermines women's rights or women's experience of discrimination. The categorisation of 'woman as nature' stems out of these frames and repertoires, and makes it possible to argue against the proposed change in legislation.

The next expert carries on this line of argumentation:

(5) MP Zdzisława Kobylińska:

(...)Wniesiony, głównie przez posłów opozycji, projekt ustawy o równym statusie kobiet i mężczyzn wydaje mi się dość kuriozalny i to z wielu powodów. Po pierwsze, tak naprawdę nie wiadomo po co i komu ma służyć podobna ustawa, która dotyczy faktu tak oczywistego, jakim jest równy status kobiet i mężczyzn, co potwierdza nie tylko zdrowy rozsądek, lecz także art. 33 konstytucji, która to równe

status quo gwarantuje, a także instytucja rzecznika praw obywatelskich dodatkowo chroniąca przed ewentualnymi nieprawidłowościami. Próba więc doprecyzowania równości płci poprzez ustawę sugeruje, iż w Polsce ta zasada jest łamana czy naruszana, że mamy do czynienia niejako z kolizją płci odmiennych, co natychmiast nasuwa mi skojarzenia z tzw. ideą walki klas, która właśnie legła u podstaw walki płci, kategorii tak chętnie wykorzystywanej przez feminizm socjalistyczny, jak określa ten rodzaj postawy prof. Roman Tokarczyk. (...)

(...) The project of a bill, put forward mainly by opposition MPs, seems to me quite bizarre and for many reasons. Firstly, in reality, no one knows for what and for whom this bill is to serve, which concerns such an obvious fact, that is the equal status of men and women, which is supported not only by common sense but also by article 33 of the Constitution, which guarantees this equal status quo, and additionally by the institution of the human rights ombudsman, which additionally protects from possible wrongdoings. The attempt at specifying gender equality through a bill suggests that in Poland this principle is broken or violated, that we are dealing with a kind of collision of opposite sexes, which immediately brings association with the so called class struggle, which in fact layd at the basis of the war of the sexes, the category so willingly used by socialist feminism, as this type of stance is called by professor Roman Tokarczyk.

This speech, which in some sections almost repeats the previously analysed one, is important in as much as it provides some more categories and frames used from within this position. First, it categorises 'women's rights' as 'obviousness' and 'common sense', invoking the REPERTOIRE OF COMMON SENSE VERSUS IDEOLOGY, and by appropriating 'common sense': constructing this position as having a monopoly of rationality. Of course, there could be no category other than 'common sense' that would point better to the ideological investment of the

hegemonic discourse. This choice can be seen as an attempt at naturalising the proposed vision and masking its ideological investment in what is referred to as 'equal status quo'.

By referring to the bill as an invocation of '**the war of the sexes**', and constructing this 'war' as parallel to '**the class war**', the communist discourse is deliberately (and ironically) evoked to bring forward the signification of 'the ideological', 'the absurd', 'the politically suspect' (as such categorisations function in the Polish political discourse). Through the **REPertoire OF COMMON SENSE VERSUS IDEOLOGY**, with the feminist critique of the society classified as 'ideology' in the above-mentioned sense, the hegemony of the discursive position is maintained. This 'common sense' position, referring to right-wing discourse as opposed to 'socialist feminist' position, is interdiscursively supported by using an academic authority of a Polish (male) professor.

The final example of the hegemonic discourse is perhaps the best 'summary' of the hegemonic discourse on women's rights, showing how all the previously mentioned categorisations and discourses are combined to construct a particular vision of femininity in the Polish context.

(6) Ewa Sikorska –Trela

(...)Kobieta zawsze w Polsce była i jest dobrze traktowana. Oddawano jej należyty szacunek i obdarzano licznymi godnościami i zaszczytami. Miała i ma otwartą drogę do kariery zawodowej, naukowej i politycznej. Może się realizować w wielu miejscach i na wielu płaszczyznach swojego

życia. Z dumą mówi się o nas "matki Polki" dla podkreślenia naszej doniosłej roli w życiu zarówno rodzinnym, jak i narodowym kraju. Jesteśmy w przytłaczającej większości krajem chrześcijańskim i katolickim. To w naszej religii i kulturze chrześcijańskiej kobieta zajmuje szczególną rolę. Bóg stworzył mężczyznę i kobietę I dał im odmienne role w życiu. Nie należy zmieniać tych ról i poprawiać Stwórcy w jego zamysłach. Kobieta to przede wszystkim matka i głowa rodziny i pomagając jej w spełnieniu tych ról wywiązemy się jako ustawodawca ze swojej roli. W innych rolach kobieta w Polsce daje sobie radę. Nie można domagać się praw, które są już w sposób naturalny zagwarantowane. Każdy bowiem człowiek rodzi się wolny i równy niezależnie od płci i nie należy domagać się tej równości poprzez paragrafy ustaw. Ona po prostu jest. Dlatego jest dla mnie całkowicie niezrozumiały pomysł uchwalania przez polski parlament ustawy, zgłoszonej przez grupę posłów z SLD, zatytułowanej: o równym statusie kobiet i mężczyzn. (...)

(...) *A woman in Poland has always been and is treated well. She has been given the proper respect and she was given numerous positions and honours. She has had and she has now an open way to professional, scientific, and political carrier. She can realise herself in many places and on many levels of her life. We are proudly referred to as 'Polish Mother' to stress our momentous role in the family as well as national life. We are in an overwhelming majority a Christian and a Catholic country. It is in our religion and Christian culture that a woman occupies a special role. God created a man and a woman and gave them different roles in life. These roles should not be changed and the Creator should not be corrected in his plans. A woman is first of all a mother and the head of the family, and by helping her in fulfilling these roles we will fulfil our role as the legislator. In other roles a woman in Poland manages well. You cannot demand rights, which are already guaranteed in a natural way. Every human being is born free and equal, regardless of sex, and one should not demand this equality through the articles of a legal bill. It [equality] simply is. That is why, for me it is a completely incomprehensible idea to vote a bill by Polish parliament, proposed by a group of MPs from SLD, entitled: on the equal status of men and women'.*

The coherence of this construction relies on two key aspects: the presentation of 'women' as a singular, abstract category: 'kobieta' (a woman), meaning either a typical example or a generic category 'the woman', both made possible and interchangeable by the lack of articles in Polish. Another aspect is the ahistorical narrative, this time referring to the history of Poland, presented as a stable entity in itself, not a progression. This collapse of specificity and change is achieved by using the present and past tenses together in a single sentence referring to the position of women: 'była' (was) with 'jest'(is), referring to the present, and together amounting to something as 'has always been and is good'. Similarly noticeable is the repetition of phrases 'in many places', 'on many levels of life' with a very vague descriptive meaning. The same can be said about the enumeration of 'positions and honours'.

These grammatical and lexical choices then provide a means of binding the utilised discourses into a coherent *frame of the 'Polish womanhood'*. This construction utilises the frames that go into building dominant constructions of national identity (through history) and of femininity combined to form this discourse on women. Yet, the lexical and grammatical choices in themselves point to the existence of some repertoire that would allow for such meanings to be constructed. It could perhaps be called the REPERTOIRE OF POLAND AS AN ABSTRACT VERSUS A CONCRETE ENTITY. The abstract meaning is clearly chosen here, if the 'concrete' option had been used, such glossing over historical change or experiences of different circumstances of women would not have been possible. We are dealing

here with the understanding of the country as a value-laden, abstract idea, and it should be noted that such a representation is continuously tied to the construction of femininity.

The nationalist meaning of womanhood is particularly pronounced by the use of the archetype of '**Polish Mother**' (Matka Polka): *We are proudly referred to as 'Polish Mother' to stress our momentous role in the family as well as national life.* The 'we' introduced here is meant to be an inclusive we, referring to Polish women, and the speaker herself as 'speaking for the group'. It is interesting to note how in the next sentence the 'we' refers not to Polish women but to Poland as a collective marked by common religion: *'We are in an overwhelming majority a Christian and a Catholic country'.*

This transition shows how much the collective of women in Polish catholic/nationalist discourse is used for the purpose of marking the national identity; that is, who 'we' are. Apart from *nationalist identity frame, the frame of religion as a source of gender difference* is explicitly stated: *God created a man and a woman and gave them different roles in life. These roles should not be changed and the Creator should not be corrected in his plans.* Having thus clearly established the authority of this discursive position through nationalist and religious discourse, the speaker then moves to state the meaning of femininity as **motherhood**: *A woman is first of all a mother and the head of the family, and by helping her in fulfilling these roles we will fulfil our role as the legislator.*

The categorisation of a woman as 'head of the family', normally used to refer to men is rather interesting. In fact, it almost suggests a presence of some kind of '*matriarchal frame*' which shows women as having real power of deciding on family matters, and, therefore, also capable of dealing with other spheres of life: *In other roles a woman in Poland manages well*. This discourse has been interdiscursively triggered by the 'common wisdom' of classifying women's double-burden as a 'success story'. Within this understanding women are better educated than men, have full-time employment, and, at the same time, have retained their traditionally decisive role of the manager of the family. Again, this is an ideologically motivated construction which was used in socialist times to gloss over the exhaustion of women, inequality in the labour market and sexual violence by constructing the notion of a 'superwoman', a modernised 'Matka Polka' of some kind. It is quite interesting to see this discourse co-opted from the more socialist construction of femininity. This and the previous frames are used for the purpose of supporting the argument that equality 'simply is' and *one should not demand this equality through the articles of a legal bill*.

This argumentation follows from, and perpetuates, the construction of womanhood structured by the above frames, and bound together by formal features such as singularity, using the past and present tenses in one sentence, repetitions, noun phrases with vague descriptive meaning, personal pronouns and modality. Also, the repertoires making essential meanings of womanhood and nation are persistently

implied. All this helps to present reality as ahistorical, stable, commonsensical and morally right. What is most important though, is that the opposite position is in this way presented as not only 'incomprehensible' but as socially dangerous: it becomes an assault on the stable reality that has just been discursively constructed as the only way of seeing the social world. Again, any possibility of change is denied in this vision of the social world.

The arguments against the legislative proposal pointed out in this section provide a means of not only refuting the proposal of legislative change but of negating the possibility of any change of the social relations between women and men. For this purpose, a strategic use of repertoires, frames and categories maintains a seemingly stable and exclusionary construct of 'the Polish woman'. These components can be summed up in the form of a table:

Examples	Repertoires	Categories	Frames	Argument
4 a & b	Poland as an INDEPENDENT (VERSUS DEPENDENT) ENTITY (National frame of reference)	natural rights/laws lack of respect human dignity woman as nature motherhood, wife, family Polish woman rebirth of the nation	'international obligations' 'the essence of laws' 'national identity' 'private sphere as women's sphere'	women's rights are natural rights and cannot be legislated
5	COMMON SENSE/RATIONALITY VERSUS IDEOLOGY	equality as obvious fact, common sense ideology war of the sexes class war	'rational knowledge' 'national law' 'feminism as a communist ideology'	women's rights are obvious and common sense and need not be legislated
6	Poland as an ABSTRACT (VERSUS A CONCRETE) ENTITY	the woman/a woman Polish Mother woman as family woman as nation head of the family, motherhood Poland as Catholic country women's roles as different	'woman as nation (religious)' 'religious frame of gender difference' 'matriarchal discourse'	Polish women have always been equal and therefore no laws need to change

Table 2 The equal status debate, position 2

We can see from the above that the analysis points to how women are discursively constructed primarily as mothers, as 'equal but different', and defined by unchangeable nature. Even more precisely, because women's lives and women's understanding of their position is constantly changing, the purpose is to create an illusion of stability where there is change and of singularity where there is difference, and to then maintain this vision as the only 'true' and even 'common sense' representation of 'reality'. It is here that we see the struggle over meaning as

the struggle between the positions that aim at the control and closure of meaning of femininity and the position that allows for some negotiation, change or transformation of this meaning to accommodate difference (both between men and women in terms of rights, and among women themselves).

4.3.3 The maternity leave debate: 'protected motherhood' versus 'protective discrimination'

The maternity leave debate provides a further example of a discursive field for the construction of a coherent notion of womanhood by the conservative political discourse. It forms an extension and an instantiation of the categorisations, which I have addressed in the previous section. Here, the notion of motherhood as the key category through which Polish women are to be seen is inserted into the discussion of particular regulations to be adopted in relation to parenting. I have chosen this particular debate as a second chunk of material to be analysed in this chapter because it relates to the key aspect in the negotiation of femininity: motherhood. In the light of the earlier ideologisation of motherhood through the abortion debates, this is a logical 'policy' outcome: re-valuing motherhood through extending paid maternity leave. Yet, this debate also ties in with the previously analysed categorisations of women in relation to rights, equality and difference. It concerns already functioning notions of women's right to employment as opposed to the ideology of motherhood as woman's main duty.

The core of the debate is the extension of maternity leave and its conditions, but the debate turns into a debate on a particular aspect of the possible changes: whether or not a woman may be allowed to stop it half way through (after 16 weeks) and go back to work, while the father would then be allowed to take the rest of the leave. The main voice here was the male MP assigned the role of reporting on how this issue was settled in the appropriate parliamentary commission:

(7)Reporting MP Antoni Szymański:

Na pytanie pani poseł mogę odpowiedzieć jedynie zgodnie z Kodeksem pracy. Według niego to nie jest tak, że można z pewnej ochrony korzystać lub nie korzystać, również w odniesieniu do urlopu macierzyńskiego.(...)

Chciałbym powiedzieć, że w pracach Komisji Nadzwyczajnej bardzo mocno argumentowano, że wówczas może dojść do rozmaitego typu nacisków pracodawców, którzy będą oczekiwali, że pracownica zadeklaruje, czy wcześniej skończy urlop macierzyński, co będzie uderzało właśnie w jej prawo do tego urlopu. Dziękuję bardzo. (Oklaski)

I can only answer the question of the lady MP only in accordance with the labour code. According to it, is not like that: you cannot [choose to] use or not use a certain protection, also in relation to maternity leave. (...)

I would like to say that in the proceedings of the extraordinary commission it was being argued strongly that [if women could come back to work after half of the maternity leave] then various types of pressures by the employers could take place, who would expect that the woman employee declare whether she will finish her leave earlier, which will impact exactly her right to this leave. (Applause)

In this fragment, the reporting MP uses two 'labels' to categorise what maternity leave is: 'protection' and 'right'. Importantly, the two are used almost simultaneously but for completely different reasons. First, 'protection' allows for the use of *the frame of special treatment of women* in relation to maternity, already legalised in the labour code. Protection here means that *you cannot [choose to] use or not use a certain protection*, thus it is understood as an obligatory legal state. The use of conjunction 'also' in '*also in relation to maternity leave*', establishes the category of maternity leave as just one among many examples of such a principle of protection. But because no such examples are given, the intended argumentation is only being masked by the 'and', since maternity leave is not a usual labour code provision. On the contrary, it is a special case, since labour law is primarily concerned with the protection of (male) workers, not with the rights of mothers. On the other hand, the use of 'protection' introduces the key frame of women as deserving special treatment and 'protection' from the (masculine) state.

This patriarchal frame includes all the notions of 'taking care' of women as young mothers, also because motherhood is classified here similarly to an illness, implying the weakness of the woman and lack of autonomy as well constructing the woman's inability to work. This categorisation immediately evokes *the frame of chivalry towards women* ascribed to Polish men (as an element of men's politeness). In turn, the existence of such a frame and its interdiscursive availability contributes towards

the creation of the argument at hand and towards the construction of femininity that the argument stems from and supports.

What is interesting is that this categorisation is also possible because of the presence of a repertoire of WELFARE VERSUS LIBERAL STATE, the first of which is bound with the categorisation of work as something that may be 'demanded' of women, despite the protective law. In this way, the 'right' becomes the right to the maternity leave and not the right to work, as the liberal state repertoire would imply. In the second section of the utterance this is made clear as the constructed danger: '*various types of pressure could take place*'. The threat for a woman is not losing a job as a result of a long absence from work but losing her 'right' to this extensive maternity leave.

Here, we have a good example of how the category of 'right', which, in relation to male employees would bring forth the categorisation of 'right to work and decent pay' as guaranteeing the individual's freedom and responsibility in relation to employment, is being reclassified. Although ostensibly still within the discourse of the law, such a categorisation is used to argue for women's primary right *not to work*, which might be jeopardised by the employers 'pressuring' her to come back to work half way through maternity leave. Of course, together with such a classification of rights comes the implied notion of women's responsibility, which now coherently refers to child rearing and not to providing for the family through employment. The REPERTOIRE OF WELFARE STATE VERSUS LIBERAL STATE is still utilised

here, juxtaposing the right to social protection of workers with the idea of responsibility and freedom of choice of the individual. It is notable that in this position, which would normally favour the liberal principles over social welfare, the situation of women is readily classified precisely as demanding protection from the pressures of employers and not as a freedom to choose whether to work or not.

Thus, we can say that this construction of the 'woman as mother' is being carried out through strategic choices on the level of categorisation (what 'protection' and 'right' mean), frames invoked by these categories, such as 'the frames of special treatment and chivalry to women', and on the level of repertoires, where the WELFARE STATE construction is used and not the LIBERAL STATE one.

In the following excerpt, the dominant construction of motherhood and femininity was more explicitly stated by the only female MP who problematised the option of 'flexible' maternity leave in this debate:

(8) MP Urszula Wachowska:

Ja również chciałabym zapytać...po wypowiedziach pań posłanek z SLD, czy urlop macierzyński jest w tym celu ustanowiony, żeby tylko chronić kobietę, czy też jest także ustanowiony z myślą o dziecku? Jest to symbioza i trzeba koniecznie w świetle tego egoistycznego patrzenia pań feministek zastanowić się nad tym, jakie korzyści z urlopu, który nazywa się macierzyński, ma dziecko, dziecko, które ma matkę, i która powinna się nim w tym najmłodszym okresie najtroskliwiej osobiście

opiekować. Babcia nie zastąpi matki. Dlatego trzeba koniecznie nauczyć polskie kobiety macierzyństwa i tego, żeby wiedziały, jakie obowiązki (Oklaski) płyną z macierzyństwa i żeby się z tych obowiązków umiały wywiązywać. (Oklaski, okrzyki, poruszenie na sali)

I also would like to ask ... after the utterances of female MPs from SLD [the Alliance of Democratic Left], if the maternity leave is set up for the purpose of protecting the woman, or is it also set up with a thought towards the child? It is a symbiosis and it must necessarily be considered, in the light of this egoistic view of the ladies feminists, what benefits from the leave, which is called 'maternity', has the child, a child who has got a mother who should at this earliest age, in a most caring way, personally look after it. A grandmother will not substitute a mother. That is why, Polish women must be taught motherhood, and that they know what obligations (applause) stem from motherhood, so that they fulfil these obligations. (applause, shouts, commotion in the room).

This female voice is exemplary in its evocation of several key aspects of this position triggered by the discussion on maternity leave. First of all, the category of 'protection' is referred to again, but for the purpose of relating it to the child: *if the maternity leave is set up for the purpose of protecting the woman, or is it also set up with a thought towards the child?* First, the category of 'symbiosis' is introduced, immediately triggering the repertoire of MOTHERHOOD AS BIOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE, rather than MOTHERHOOD AS SOCIAL TASK. We cannot fail to notice the contradictory meaning of the category 'symbiosis'. It suggests a biological co-existence of two organisms where each benefits from, and cannot survive without the other. But in this discourse on motherhood, there is to be a selfless, uninterested sacrifice of the mother for the child.

The accusation of *egoistic view of ladies feminists* means that feminists, by default, have the wrong, 'egoistic' perspective on motherhood.²³⁵ But what does this 'egoism' consist of? The redirected notion of the protection of the child is clearly defined as demanding the total, selfless attention of the mother: *a mother who should at this earliest age, in a most caring way, personally look after it*. Of course, the frame that makes this categorisation possible, and which is being established as the only right one, is that on '*motherhood as woman's vocation*', which in turn relies on religious and biologically deterministic categorisations of gender based on essentialist notions of femininity. We may even talk about an available REPERTOIRE OF SEX VERSUS GENDER here, where the only choice is that of sex. This choice states that biologically, and/or by God's design, (hence '*vocation*') women are predisposed to motherhood, and it is their **duty** (later renamed as **obligation**) that must be fulfilled. Here, we have a coherent answer to the accusation of egoism: if a woman is only partially and only for a shorter time devoted to the role of the primary caretaker, she is not a 'proper' mother and, consequently, she can be classified as 'egoistic' and 'feminist'.

Importantly, another repertoire is made use of here, namely that of CHILDREARING AS A COLLECTIVE VERSUS SOLITARY TASK. This repertoire allows for a choice between two notions of family where motherhood is carried out: the extended family and the nuclear family. By stating that *a grandmother will not substitute a mother* the speaker clearly proposes a choice of

²³⁵ I have noticed in other sources, especially in women's magazines, that the accusation of 'egoism'

nuclear family where only the biological mother and no other women must fulfil 'the vocation' (and most certainly not men). The moral tone is strengthened by the use of modality: 'should' is used in relation to the mother. This tone suggests that what we are dealing with is a construction of an ideal type of motherhood and family: the nuclear family.

Of course, this masks both the experience of motherhood that women in Poland have commonly shared with other women, and, in all probability, this experience was also part of the speaker's own life, as a daughter or mother. The nuclear family with a non-working mother was obviously not the common model under communism, precisely because women worked, they needed the help of (female) relatives or day-care centres in parenting. Here, the proposed extension of the leave is clearly a discursive move to reverse the situation, and either come back to earlier patriarchal notions of women as non-working mothers (though this would still imply the frame of motherhood as a collective women's task) or rather new, 'pseudo-traditional' motherhood is being argued for. The construction is characteristically framed in nationalist discourse, as if to mask its economic and social significance as secondary to the national.

The employment of '**Polish women**' is an extremely widespread and also a key phrase. Throughout the debates I have noted that the usual way in which the dominant discourse will categorise women in the plural is as 'Polish women'.

is often directed at any woman who refuses to have children or even to get married.

However, this does not only refer to the collective of women put in the repertoire of NATION VERSUS SOCIETY, but it also evokes the archetype category of **Polish Mother** (Matka Polka) that lies at the core of the frame of womanhood conceived as both motherhood and nationhood in Poland. Evoking the construction of woman as the signifier of the nation and the archetype category of Polish Mother nullifies the understanding of women as citizens, with equal roles and equal rights.

Also, actual women are placed against and negatively evaluated in not being Polish Mother-like: *that is why Polish women must be taught motherhood*. The *national identity frame* is used here to present a negative assessment of the reality in relation to the mythical, in order to argue coherently that the option of coming back to work after a half-period of maternity leave is not 'fulfilling the obligations' of motherhood. This problematises women as well as patronises them (or 'matronises' them); they are now constructed as not good mothers and therefore not good 'Polish women'. At the same time, what is being argued for is a new society where women are 're-traditionalised' to fit neatly the newer construction of the family and work relations.

We may restate the major components of this discursive position as:

Example	Repertoires	Categories	Frames	Argument
7	WELFARE (VERSUS LIBERAL) state	maternity, right (to maternity leave) protection	<i>special treatment of women'</i> <i>chivalry to women'</i>	long maternity leave is a protection for women as mothers
8	Motherhood as a BIOLOGICAL (VERSUS SOCIAL) experience Motherhood as a INDIVIDUAL (VERSUS COLLECTIVE) TASK NATION (VERSUS LIBERAL) state SEX (VERSUS GENDER)	protection, child symbiosis, obligation Polish women (Polish Mother)	<i>motherhood as a vocation and fate of women'</i> <i>frame of national identity'</i> <i>'woman as nation'</i>	long maternity leave serves the child's interest women must be taught motherhood

Table 3 The maternity leave debate, position 1

This discourse represents an instantiation of the logic of 'equal but different', which I have analysed in the previous section also in relation to women's rights. The understanding of difference in relation to maternity is supplied here with the meaning of 'unique women's vocation' which is to serve the child and the nation. Therefore, even the concept of women's right to employment (and equal pay) can be undermined in fighting for an obligatory maternity leave that cannot be shared with the father or other members of the family. Biologically understood, motherhood is constructed as a woman's obligation, and, paradoxically, as a privilege (by virtue of getting compensation for being out of work). Again, this position is engaged in constructing the abstract, ideal womanhood, in order to shape the social relations accordingly. But more importantly perhaps, once put into the frame of biological and

national duty motherhood is constantly reworked as the marker of nationhood and of national identity that cannot be discursively (and therefore socially) negotiated.

The response of the counter-discourse relied on resistance to and problematisation of the 'ideal type' rhetoric. While arguing for the more flexible maternity leave (second part of which could be taken by the father), and while problematising the extended length of the leave, this discourse constructs a different notion of motherhood, and, consequently, femininity.

These are two examples of the problematisation of the bill by exploring its effects for women:

(9) MP Maria Gajeka-Bożek:

(...) Czy zdajecie sobie państwo sprawę z tego, że wiele kobiet nie decyduje się na urodzenie drugiego dziecka, dlatego że boi się, iż tak długi urlop macierzyński nie pozwoli im powrócić do pracy? (Poruszenie na sali) Znam wiele takich przypadków, że kobiety, bojąc się o utratę miejsca pracy, nie decydują się na drugie i kolejne dziecko.

(...) Do you realise that many women decide not to have a second child, because they are afraid that such a long maternity leave will not let them go back to work? (Commotion in the room) I know many such cases that women, being afraid of losing their job, decide not to have a second and next child.

(10) MP Joanna Sosnowska:

Panie Marszałku! Wysoka Izbo! Mam takie pytanie. 26 tygodni to jest pół roku. Chciałabym, żeby mi pan sprawozdawca podał, za jaką kwotę miesięcznie kobieta będzie uwiązana w domu z dzieckiem, bez prawa do pracy, konkretnie w liczbach, po prostu, z czego ta rodzina będzie żyła przez te pół roku?

(Głos z sali: Miłość nie ma ceny.)

I have this question. Twenty six weeks [the length of the maternity leave] that's half a year. I'd like Mr reporting MP to tell me for what sum [of money] per month will the woman be tied to the home with the child, without the right to employment, in concrete numbers, simply, on what will this family live for a year?

(A voice from the benches: Love has no price)

In terms of the progress of argumentation within this debate, Excerpt 9 is an answer to the position of the reporting MP, who problematised the option of returning to work earlier. However, we have to notice that the proposed construction of women constitutes an answer to the 'ideal type' vision of motherhood. The speaker decided not to talk about women as Polish mothers, instead she uses 'many women' in plural, a categorisation which allows for the differentiation between social groups and personal preferences of particular women. But what is implied as a primary reason for choosing not to have children is economic motivation: the need to keep one's job as a source of income. This understanding is supported by an appeal to experience: *I know many such cases*, which also presupposes a non-unitary vision of women. While not denying that some women may be happy with the extended leave, she stresses that 'many women' are already finding maternity leave problematic because they either have to or want to keep their job: *because they are afraid, that*

such a long maternity leave will not let them go back to work. This presents maternity leave as a '**threat**' to women's labour rights, as women are *afraid of losing their jobs*. This discourse does not deny that women are mothers (here it is presented as concerning women who already have a child), but it chooses to represent women primarily in the **frame of women as workers**, even if this is due to economic conditions.

In the second excerpt (10), the speaker uses an even more direct appeal to economic necessity by asking what will the maternity leave amount to in sum; which implies that the amount of money will not be sufficient, an implication made clear by the phrase *on what will this family live*. Although the speaker is talking about 'the woman' in the singular, she is not talking about the ideal type at all. Instead, she is talking about the '**average**', as if trying to show an example; 'this family' serves the same function. Similarly, the length of the maternity leave is negatively evaluated: *twenty six weeks that's half a year*, which, in the context of the following question about money, implies that it is too long.

What is most noteworthy, however, is the categorisation of maternity leave itself as '**confinement**', evoked by the phrase *the woman will be tied to the home with the child*. The metaphor of being physically bound applied to a woman on maternity leave provides an obvious answer to the construction of maternity in the dominant discourse, as a state of happy 'symbiosis', meaning selfless attention to the child. Here, the centre of attention is the woman, not the child, and the experience of

staying at home is seen as discriminatory, especially in the context of economic lack. This utilises *the frame of women's poverty*, but also implies an **alternative discourse on maternity** (as a frustrating or difficult experience for women).

It is this assessment of motherhood that is immediately counteracted by another MP's intrusive remark. This short aside, in interactive terms, would be characterised as an attempt at trivialising the argument of economic need. However, it also serves the purpose of forcefully bringing the categorisation into 'the right' perspective: by alluding to love, the speaker reasserts the value of motherhood as an instinctive, emotional experience, and also as a primary duty. Because romantic love is a light and often humorous as well as a pleasant 'topic', the discussion of economic hardship is undermined, and women are constructed as emotional beings for whom the love of the father and child is the only need in life.

Both of the excerpts quoted here have tried to move the discursive construction of womanhood away from either of the dominant repertoires, frames and categorisations. Instead, they have used appeals to the 'experience' of women as rational beings, taking decisions about maternity based on economic and labour situation. This counter-discourse, which we could call **discourse on mothers as workers**, needs to evoke different choice within the available repertoires, not of MOTHERHOOD AS A BIOLOGICAL OR RELIGIOUS DUTY, but of MOTHERHOOD AS SOCIAL TASK. Only this interpretive choice allows for making the argument that the experience of various women is different: it implies

different social groups or classes of women facing different problems. Motherhood, conceived as a social task, is not given or stable, but depends on the social conditions, while the decision to have children can then be envisaged as not informed by either moral, religious or national duty, but as individual and also collective decisions based on the perception of economic needs and conditions. It is important to note that these needs and conditions are ascribed not to the woman but still to the family, the decision to keep their job is not women's egoistic whim, but an economic necessity for the whole family.²³⁶

The final example of the counter-discourse constitutes an answer to the accusation of egotism and 'feminism', levelled at the women taking this position by the speaker in example 8.

(11) MP Renata Szynalska,

Chciałam tylko powiedzieć, że feminizm to jest walka o równe prawa kobiet i mężczyzn, pani poseł, to po pierwsze, i w związku z tym mam pytanie do pana posła: czy tylko kobiety muszą zajmować się dziećmi i czy ten zapis nie powoduje tego, że jeżeli mężczyzna i kobieta, rodzice, będą chcieli podjąć wspólną decyzję, kto będzie zajmował się dzieckiem - należy tu rozumieć okres po 16. czy 14. tygodniu od momentu urodzenia - będzie to jak gdyby większa odpowiedzialność dla obojga rodziców?

I just wanted to say that feminism is a fight for equal rights of men and women, Ms MP, that firstly, and in connection with this, I have a question to Mr reporting MP: is it that only women must take

²³⁶ This argument may also state that is there is no economic need the woman should stay at home and bear the confinement rather than go back to work. This is not perceived in this way often in Poland, because such a situation is quite rare, and because women have successfully been previously

care of children, and does that passage [referring to the second part of the leave as optional for either parent] not cause that if a man and a woman, the parents, want to make a joint decision about who will take care of the child - the period after the sixteenth or fourteenth week from birth should be understood here - that this somehow will be a bigger responsibility for them both?

The definition of feminism offered here is among the most positive and assertive statements on the topic I have seen in all the parliamentary debates analysed. The definition also introduces *the frame of women and men as equal* in order to counter the dominant construction of motherhood as the motivation/effect of woman's difference. Thus, equality is being argued for as the right way to approach also the maternity leave issue. That is why the linking phrase 'in connection with this' can be used to introduce the question: *is it that only women must take care of children*, which is in fact a formulation of the argument. This is achieved by listing both the man and the woman and by the choice of the category 'parents'. Such a discursive position allows for bringing men into the picture, and thus for talking about 'parenting'.

Moreover, within **REPertoire OF MOTHERHOOD AS A COLLECTIVE VERSUS INDIVIDUAL TASK**, the choice of the former is implied also by the categorisation of 'joint decision'. It is important to note that all speakers can potentially make use of either repertoire, and therefore evoke certain meanings about childbearing that will be coherent in a particular context. Here, the choice of one

constructed as workers. But it does make sense in the new, capitalist perception of 'traditional' women's role proposed in this debate.

brings forth the argument that flexible maternity leave should be adopted in the law. It is within the repertoire of PARENTHOOD AS A COLLECTIVE TASK that notions of **shared responsibility** in the context of child-caring can be constructed, this time not in relation to extended family but to the couple. Parenting understood in this way is argued for as *a bigger responsibility for them both*. Note that here we have both the construction of nuclear family as the 'right' context for child-rearing and we have an 'educating' purpose: what 'will be' [a bigger responsibility] can be understood as meaning 'should be'. This means that what the speaker is performing is also a construction of femininity in relation to motherhood as well as a construction of the family. However, it is being argued here that the nuclear family should be of the 'partnership' kind, where women are not categorised as solely mothers and men as solely breadwinners; on the contrary, men should be able to take over part of the parenting, including the maternity leave.

All in all, this position constructs a visibly different notion of motherhood and femininity than the dominant one, while maintaining some of the dominant categorisations, notably that of the nuclear family. The main points analysed in this counter-position can be seen in the table:

Example	Repertoires	Categories	Frames	Argument
9&10	Motherhood as a SOCIAL (VERSTUS BIOLOGICAL) task	many women, motherhood as decision, right/need to work motherhood as confinement	<i>'women as workers'</i> <i>'female poverty'</i>	a long maternity leave is a threat to women's/family's economic needs
11	Motherhood as a SOCIAL (VERSTUS BIOLOGICAL) task Motherhood as a COLLECTIVE (VERSUS INDIVIDUAL) task	feminism equal rights parents, joint decision responsibility	<i>'men and women as equal'</i> <i>'marriage as partnership'</i>	maternity leave should be shared by the two parents

Table 4 The maternity leave debate, position 2.

The analysis of the texts coming from this debate provides a particularly good example of the precarious and unstable dominance of the hegemonic discourse. While arguments for extended family leave are raised for the purpose of discursively securing the 'obligatory motherhood' and 'traditional family values' even better, the debate is used to demand a change in the attitudes to parenting, possibly with men taking over part of the role, including maternity leave itself. Nevertheless, the debate presents the interpretive implications of the choice between the discursive positions analysed in the previous debate. Here, the logic of women's difference and women's essential nature is shown in a debate on the key aspect within this understanding: the

obligatory and essential task of motherhood as the duty of the woman which is to override her other subject positions, also that of a worker. On the other hand, the counter discourse manifests here the implications of arguing from within the logic of equality: the need to redefine maternity to include men as caretakers (or at least to leave open such a position), and the need to balance the length of maternity leave with women's other economic and professional needs and their other social roles.

4.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide an answer to Research Question 1: How can the effects of power struggle be captured in the construction of discourses on women in the political debates? (What are the ideological investments of the competing discourses on women in the Polish political sphere?). The sub-questions to be explored were:

R.Q.1.1 How is the construction of dominant ideology and exclusion of other theories of the social, subject positions, social relations of women and men achieved in the Polish political discourse?

R.Q.1.2 How does the counter-discourse negotiate the meanings of femininity in this context? That is, what are the alternative constructions of femininity that are put forward as less- exclusionary discourses on women?

In order to provide an answer to this general question I have decided to concentrate on the understanding of discourse as textually constructed representation, which meant analysing the 'content' of particular texts. This also meant that the contextual and interactive aspects of the debates were not analysed in this chapter. But any textual analysis is potentially infinite, which is why I have decided to point out and compare specific elements of the proposed texts: categories, repertoires and frames used in building arguments. These elements, I believe, constitute very useful tools for the study of ideologically constructed discursive constructs of femininity.

My analysis suggests that in the parliamentary debates there are distinct positions which argue for a completely different vision of femininity. In one of them the preferred categorisation is that of 'woman as mother' and of 'woman as different from man'. This goes hand in hand with the categorisation of 'woman as nature', but it also serves as signifier of the nation and as a biologically or religiously determined essence. The categories constructed and frames utilised are bound together by a strategic choice of repertoires. This position can be labelled 'a hegemonic discourse on women', because it overgeneralises women as a homogenous group, not leaving any space for a discussion of particular women's position or experiences: women have no choice in self-definition or aspiration other than as mothers, not even as mothers with different needs and choices.

In obvious ways this discourse also ignores actual women by constructing abstract 'ideal femininity'; women's experiences of discrimination, economic hardship, the

need to combine various social roles are secondary to the dominant unitary perception of women. Similarly, the reality of discrimination is masked by the assertion that equality 'simply is'. This brings us to the most exclusionary aspect of this position: while collapsing specificity, historical change or the notion of experienced discrimination, (or, for the purpose of this debate the notion of experience as such) this discourse at the same time appropriates rationality, common sense and knowledge. It presents the only 'right' vision of the social, thus negating the very possibility of critique of and debate over the social relations of women. It is interesting to see to what extent this discourse on femininity (and through it, the political discourse as a whole) is slowly being colonised by the religious discourse and how the ensuing political discourse uses gender debates to maintain its claim legitimacy. It is not only the representation of women that is being reworked and established but also the dominant understanding of politics and the national identity, social relations and the relationship between citizens and the state.

The contents of the second position (R.Q.1.2) are visibly different. The proposed categorisations are of women as usually both mothers and workers, which does not presuppose that some may be seeing themselves as only one or the other. Also, women are primarily constructed as citizens. In such a categorisation, the notion of equality is stressed, rather than that of difference. It must be noted that equality is not constructed as sameness either between women or between genders, but equality is aspired to, *regardless* of differences. Because seeing women as a social group, rather than the woman-archetype or 'ideal-type', the experience of violence and

discrimination can be made visible in arguments. The same goes for the specific discussion of motherhood, envisaged as a collective task rather than solitary task, a decision rather than vocation.

This position is definitely less-exclusionary because it does open up possibilities for the differentiation between women, their experiences, and differing needs. It is not a revolutionary position; it shares a lot of meanings with the hegemonic position (for example the appreciation of nuclear family, and in this particular set of debates at least, of heterosexuality). However, it does not exclude other meanings or the possibility of a further negotiation of femininity. It does seem to come closer to a feminist women's discourse; indeed, to a degree it utilises the feminist critique of society. As it strives to be emancipating, this position comes closer to a non-exclusionary discourse on women (and of women). This discourse is, for the moment, the resisting one, trying to bring back and put forward onto the public agenda the notion of equality, which has been overshadowed by a newly re-traditionalised vision of femininity offered by the hegemonic discourse.

CHAPTER 5

An analysis of discourse as a process: domination and resistance mechanisms in a Polish parliamentary debate on women

(...) it is by looking at a discourse *in operation*, in a specific historical context, that it is possible to see whose interests it serves at a particular moment.²³⁷

5.1 *The analytical perspective*

In Chapter 4 I analysed the discourses on women as constructs, where the struggle over meaning was seen in the textual 'content' of the opposing discourses. The interactions within which these meanings were fought over were not analysed. Rather, I looked at a number of texts taken out of their immediate context and even co-text to pinpoint larger constructions of femininity through discourse. This was necessary in order to provide meaningful insights into the effects of power to define women from particular ideological positions. In this way, we have gained some access to the different constructions of femininity in the Polish political discourse.

However, as I have pointed out earlier in my discussion of the dialectical understanding of discourse within CDA, the 'representations' of women are always achieved through a series of 'presentations', where the meanings are by no means stable: they need to be put forward over and over again to constitute 'a discourse on women'. In other words, the construct is always a construction in progress. This aspect could also be shown on the textual level to some extent where in the previous chapter I analysed the ideational content of a particular position at the intersection of categorisation and frames and repertoires.

In this chapter, I would like to illuminate the dynamic, situational, performative side of discourses on women. That is, I am now interested in tracing not only what is being constructed but, particularly, how it is being discursively secured in a given interactive event. In this chapter I will analyse the discourses on women using the understanding of discourse as a process. In this way, I will show how power is exercised 'in action', within an institutional, situational, and discursive context of a parliamentary debate related to women's issues. The aim of the analysis is to provide an answer to Research Question 2: How can the power struggle between the two discourses on women be captured in the process of a political debate?

I would like to trace how the struggle over meaning is performed in one instance of a parliamentary debate. The main analytical tools I will use in the analysis are the

²³⁷ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 108.

strategies of domination and resistance as theorised by feminist linguistics. The domination aspect may be seen as corresponding to 'silencing' seen as part of the more abstract understanding of discourse, as verbal interaction. In addition, we could see the silencing/voicing or domination/resistance as a struggle over 'terms of access', not only related to women as such, but also to particular subject positions/discourses on women.

5.2 *Contextual and interdiscursive background of the debate*

The debate I have chosen to analyse is somewhat similar in its subject matter to the debate on equal status, which was part of my material in the previous chapter. In this respect, it also represents another focal point in the struggle over discourses on women. The discourses represented are essentially similar constructs to the ones I analysed in Chapter 4: 'women's rights as international obligations' versus 'women's rights within the religious, nationalist discourse and the abortion discourse'. The content of the two positions and the constructs of femininity they put forward being already familiar, I should be able to concentrate on how the two positions 'interact' in this particular discursive moment.

There were two further reasons why this particular debate was chosen. Firstly, it is shorter than most of the parliamentary debates I have looked at, and therefore more manageable to analyse as a whole. The reason for the relative shortness of the debate

itself is that it is not a part of the legislative process: it does not constitute one of the readings of a bill. Instead, it comes from a framework of 'MPs' questions time', which is a time at the end of a day's proceedings in the parliament reserved for the purpose of discussing particular political events, posing questions to government officials by particular MPs, or simply offering a statement on an issue of an MP's concern. Though shorter in terms of the allotted time for contributions and debate, the discussions to arise in this context are just as much part of a parliamentary discourse as the explicitly legislative points of the agenda. However, this particular sub-genre of parliamentary discussion is also interesting in as much as it is slightly more spontaneous, allowing the MPs to raise and debate very 'topical' issues. In this respect, the contributions are shorter as well as more spontaneous; coming closer to informal interaction, while still following all the rules of parliamentary conduct (such as being controlled by the Speaker who gives floor to speakers and who allots the floor time they are allowed to use).

5.2. 1. Description of the selected data

The debate I have chosen is initiated by a female MP from the Parliamentary Women's Group, on the topic of the performance of the official Polish delegation at the United Nations Conference on Women in New York in June 2000. The discussion takes place on 29 of June 2000. The problem concerned both the head of the delegation seen as 'unsuitable' for the role and the content of his position on women's issues. The question asked by the MP criticises the head of the delegation

and his alleged position at the conference itself, as well as at a press conference following his return.

This is an interesting situation to consider, as it seems to represent one of the most successful instances of an intrusion of feminist discourse into the parliamentary sphere. In fact, the successful launch of the debate would suggest a transformative process at work in the political discourses on women, possibly stemming from the renegotiation of femininity that is ongoing in other spheres of social communication. Therefore, it is particularly interesting to see the strategies by which this discursive position is trying resisting the dominant one, and the corresponding silencing strategies used to preserve the hegemonic discourse on women.

In order to understand the context of this debate and its progress, we have to stress its interdiscursive and intertextual character, in several meanings of the term. Namely, the launch of this debate in the parliament relies on the knowledge and usage of other discursive events. On a more general level of the inter/discourse, this debate should be seen in the light of all the previous debates on gender that had taken place in this parliament cycle (1997-2001), especially the yearly positive assessments of the abortion bill (in 2000 and 2001), and the negative assessments of the two 'equal status' legislative projects (in 1999). All these debates represent the discursive battle over femininity in this particular institutional context. In terms of a more immediate discursive background, it is provided by the event of the New York conference itself, and the events that immediately followed it, such as the press conference with the

head of the Polish delegation as well as the protests of women's organisations present at the conference. More importantly, the key texts that both started the debate and were interdiscursively evoked, were newspaper reports on the events in question and an official open letter issued by women's NGOs and addressed to the government. The main point of criticism was the alleged opposition of the Polish delegation to the inclusion of phrases dealing with women's discrimination, the diversity of women, the rights to sexual orientation and reproductive choice in the final conference document.

This battle over the meaning of women's issues is being performed in the wider public sphere including the media's pressure on the political institutions; in this case, the government.²³⁸ A difference of public opinion on the issues was clearly stated in the media.

A further basis for the discursive event in the parliament was provided by another sphere taking an active part in this struggle over the discourse on women: the independent women's organisations whose representatives were present at the conference. The protest letter issued by them constitutes a discursive response to the position on women presented by the Polish delegation:

²³⁸ The particularly criticised statement related to questions about rights for sexual minorities was quoted in the same newspaper report as: *'Concepts that are being introduced open up the space no longer for tolerance, but for affirmation- said Kropiwnicki- There will be no tolerance for paedophiles!*

(...)Polish law does not include any statements against sexual rights. Moreover, The Constitution of RP [Republic of Poland] forbids any form of discrimination, which also concerns discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Furthermore, this stance is not in accordance with the Amsterdam Treaty, which explicitly forbids discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and to which Polish law is being adapted in the process of integration with the European Union.²³⁹

The open letter also voiced the understanding of the main mechanism of domination of the hegemonic discourse - exclusion of alternative position or exclusion from any interaction²⁴⁰:

(...) Despite numerous attempts at contacting the government, including the Office of the Government Envoy for the Family, made by the women's organisations, they were not allowed to participate in the consultation before the conference.(...)²⁴¹

This protest letter is an example of a feminist discourse demanding inclusion and negotiation of discourses on women within the political sphere. It represents an interaction of feminist organisations and information centres (such as OSKA which distributed the protest letter to the media) with the institutions of political power. A high degree of resistance to the official position and a demand for change, or at least a demand for interactive engagement, is thus put forward.

²³⁹ OSKA, (National Women's Information Centre) 'The protests of women's circles regarding the position of the Polish government at the New York conference. (June 2000), www.oska.org.pl

²⁴⁰ The comment of OSKA centre including the text of two such protest letters states that they became the basis for the MP's debate on the issue in the Parliament.OSKA, www.oska.org.pl (June 2000)

The debate is a relevant sample of the struggle over meaning in its content as well as its progress. The debate consisted of the contributions from 13 speakers who made 16 utterances from the rostrum (recognised by the Vice Speaker), excluding the inserted remarks coming from seated MPs and the interactions with the Vice Speaker controlling the debate.²⁴² Among the 13 speakers who occupied the floor, 6 were women (of which 4 represented the challenging discourse, here in the position of critiquing the government delegation). This proportion is significant as it represents one of the most women-driven debates connected to the negotiation of femininity that I have encountered while researching numerous parliamentary debates. Although not all of the utterances could be included in the analysis, nor could I quote the whole of the utterances included,²⁴³ most of the speakers and the arguments presented are analysed. In most cases the analysis of the included utterances follows the chronological order of the speakers, unless I perceived an utterance to be directed at an earlier utterance than the immediately preceding one.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Ibidem.

²⁴² The number of turns taken would be much higher as several utterances continued despite interruptions or even short exchanges with the Vice Speaker.

²⁴³ Such an analysis would be impossible for reasons of space, and it would also be superfluous to my research aim.

²⁴⁴ The actual order of the utterances is indicated by their numbers.

5.3 The analysis

The actual question starting the debate mentions some of the points of contention over the meaning of 'women's issues' arising from the conference:

(Utterance 1, Exchange 1)

MP Iwona Sledzinska-Katarasinska:

Polish public opinion is shocked by the reports about the participation of the Polish government delegation in the special session of the plenary meeting of the UN, a delegation under the leadership of minister Kropiwnicki. The session was dedicated to evaluating in the world exactly the implementation of the document called a Platform for Action, passed in 1995 at the UN world conference on the problems of women.

The reports are quite correct because they were confirmed after the return by minister Kropiwnicki himself, who acknowledged at a press conference that the information which reached public opinion is correct. And thus, firstly, the Polish delegation voted against the signing of the final declaration, because, among other things, there was a formulation forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Secondly, the Polish delegation questioned the necessity of respecting and implementing women's rights as human rights, and, when asked about the reasons for such a position and about not maintaining European standards [on women's rights] at the meeting with UN representatives, [the delegation] explained that [Poland] is not in the [European] Union yet, so it doesn't necessarily need to follow all these standards.

And finally, minister Kropwnicki himself, in his speech at the plenary session [of the UN conference], at least in my evaluation, did not talk on the subject. It might have been difficult to show the achievements in ameliorating women's situation in the last five years, but it was possible to develop the wonderful statement which exists in the Polish constitution, and at least show this as a real success and achievement. The actions for the family and the actions which exist in our [Polish]

law and in our legal system aimed at the protection of unborn life were not the actions that were the subject of the conference.(...) And the statements that the participation of women in public life is rising were completely untrue, because unfortunately, this participation is actually falling. And also the attempt at marginalising or even calling marginal the phenomenon of violence in the family is shocking, at the time when, fortunately, fortunately, we have such a degree of freedom that painful phenomena of this kind, which have always existed are known to the public opinion and the authorities are trying to fight them. There is probably no reason to hide this and call it marginal. I'm not interested in the views/

Vice Speaker Jan Krol:

/ - Mrs MP, you have gone over the time three

times already

MP: *Just the last sentence, Mr Speaker.*

Vice Speaker: *You are starting the third minute.*

- The topic is serious, Mr Speaker, because/

Vice Speaker:

/I understand

MP: *...it does not relate to the private views of the members of the delegation, these I do not go into, only [my point is related to] the position of the government of a country, which has it written in the constitution, that nobody can be discriminated for whatever reason, which is aspiring to a quick membership in the European Union. This is what I mean and this is my question: How does the Polish government intend to neutralise the fatal effects of this appearance on the international forum?*

Vice Speaker: *Thank you very much. I apologise for that remark, the topic is important, but the regulations are an important issue as well, and they limit me. I want to be fair and execute the rules that bind all of us equally.*

The beginning of the debate is interesting as it represents both the struggle over the content of the discourses on women and at the same time it presents the other side of this struggle: the battle over the terms of access. The female MP is asserting a high

degree of power in taking up the debate and in going over the 'allotted' time of one minute to present her position. Not only does she present her case, she also challenges the rules of this particular form of interaction.

The example clearly points to the struggle over content as always also happening in terms of the struggle over the process of discourse as social interaction. The female MP fights for the floor to present what is perceived as very important by her. But it may be controversial and therefore marginalized. That is why she takes care to make it a serious and complex criticism. However, this means contending the one-minute rule of the allowed time to pose her question.

The speaker herself comes from a position where the rules of the debate are there to be broken, if they are broken for the 'right' reason. Alternatively, her going over the time suggests her subversion of the rules as not democratic at all but constraining adequate voicing of her position. In this case she succeeds in resisting the interruption by the speaker, obviously aimed at silencing further points on the ground of the rules of conduct: the one-minute question time allotted to the questioner. She even manages to gain an acknowledgement of her position from the Vice Speaker, that her action is acceptable ('I understand'). However, the Vice Speaker also asserts his power over the terms of access using his institutional power to silence and the institutional discourse which is believed to be liberal and fair. Having seen this example of voicing an alternative discourse and a successful resistance of exclusion

(by interruption and by control over the terms of access), it is interesting to see the way in which the debate proceeds.

In terms of the launch of the debate proper, the female MP asserts the power to subvert the hegemonic discourse by clearly voicing the alternative position (the criticism that abortion law was not an appropriate focus of the event and the criticism of the minister's description of family violence as 'marginal' serves the purpose of both undermining the hegemonic discourse and hinting at a more appropriate position on women). She employs the strategy of a metadiscursive exposition of domination (both of exclusion and diminishing of women's voices) in the Minister's choice and assessment of subjects discussed at the conference. She thus reclaims the silenced position and inserts it back into the debate (the position of women's rights as human rights and the understanding of violence and discrimination), and thereby claims solidarity of perspective within this position (by reference to a shocked public opinion). To do so, she directly evokes or implies both the press conference and the subsequent newspaper reports that allow her to claim that *the information which reached public opinion is correct*. Having thus voiced the silenced position and resisted silencing by the hegemonic discourse²⁴⁵, she manages to problematise the legitimacy of this perspective as the right way to construct women.

²⁴⁵ As represented by the minister's statement at the conference and possibly, as performed by the challenge of her right to floor by the Vice Speaker. The motivation of the later is unclear, by the effect is silencing.

It has to be noted here that the minister facing the criticism, although present in the room, does not take part in the discussion. Instead, a female government official (Envoy for Family Affairs) is given the responsibility to represent 'the government position'. In this way, the criticism's force is immediately diminished as it cannot be directly answered. The institutional 'terms of access' thus pre-determine the degree to which a debate can be engaged in at all. The counter-discourse is in a way assigned a losing position in as much as its intervention loses force since it cannot become an open debate: the accountability of the criticised person is avoided by the choice of the 'defending' speaker (a choice made possible by bureaucratic rules). The Envoy employs the strategy of further evasion and diminishing of the criticism. She does that using institutional and legal jargon, which makes her response very vague:

(Utterance 2)

Government Envoy for Family, Maria Smereczynska:

I would like to say at the beginning that Polish government carefully prepared for the conference, that is why the minister -member of the Council of Ministers, who supervises the governmental council on people that deals with these issues as well, became the head of the delegation. (...) As for the conference itself, it concerned the evaluation of the situation after five years of implementation of the document [Platform for Action] and all the documents previously passed by the United Nations stated this, [...] [there was to be] no negotiating of the negotiated document, passed with difficulty in a consensus in 1995, in a consensus that satisfied nobody, [there was to be] no opening of negotiations on the topic of the document. (...) However, voices were heard that, it is necessary because the time is passing to modernise everything and, in relation to this, these, negotiated in difficulty, expressions

from five years before, should be enlarged by more up-to date ones that were being discussed, which are to take into account more issues related to this topic. (...)Meanwhile these were indeed phrases and statements, which had never been defined in any other documents of the United Nations, which were to appear there for the first time without practically any reference. These were the three statement related to sexual rights, related to the diversity of women and related to sexual orientations. (...)

The issue concerning the marginalisation of the phenomenon of violence-if you read the whole sentence and the context of this expression without those two previous sentences and [without] the end of this sentence, then indeed given in this way, it loses its sense, while, the whole sentence is to reflect that the problem is not a widespread problem in Poland, however, it is such an important problem, having huge implications for morality, [and] impact on social life, that at this moment it has been given mainly into the hands of the county centres for family help and is being dealt with, and nobody intends, nor is it implied in these sentences which appeared in this speech, that the problem is marginalised. The fact that it is defined in this quantity does not mean that it is marginalised, it just means that it is not a widespread problem.

In this utterance, credit is given to the minister as the government's choice of delegation chief²⁴⁶ and then the speaker proceeds to diminish the validity of the conference statements on women 'on institutional grounds' and 'in legal terms'. The Envoy responds to criticism by stating that the demanded statements on women were inappropriate and unjustified in the conference context, thus supporting the criticised individual and his position. It has to be noted that the speaker distances herself from the issues in question by using vague or evasive statements. For example, in the phrase describing the proposed changes the source of these proposals is described as

'voices were heard' and the document in question is referred to as *'everything'*; the content of the new formulations of women's rights is initially not stated but referred to as *'more up-to date ones that were being discussed, which are to take into account more issues related to this topic'*. Neither the problem of women's issues nor the statements in question are mentioned without a long introduction into the institutional discourse on the conference and its 'acceptable' purpose: the evaluation of the program and not further negotiation of its terms. Finally, the speaker asserts the minister's position on the problem of marginalising violence against women, using the argument that describing a problem as marginal is not an action of marginalising it, but rather an assessment of its (small) quantity.

We can see from the degree of vagueness employed that this position is far from secure in this moment of the debate, and, indeed, it is successfully undermined by the original speaker:

(Utterance 3)

MP Iwona Sledzinska Katarasinska:

Mrs Minister [the envoy] I have this complete sentence here and I know what it says. That firstly.(...)

Secondly, I have this question, I don't know if you are in a position to answer it but maybe you have someone to consult. Thus, I have found the affirmation of knowledge received earlier in the interviews with Mr minister Kropiwnicki in the context of the press conference. I am sorry that in none of these reports were there these explanations you have just so pointedly and reliably given here.

²⁴⁶ This is done using his rather obscure government function unrelated to gender issues. It is meant to counteract the implied point that since the Minister's portfolio is strategic studies and his stance is

However, the accusation that the head of delegation was maybe not exactly the person best oriented in the subject [area] in which he had to move has justification, at least in this that during one of meetings or a conference the minister distinctly happened to make semantic mistakes when he mistook homosexuality with paedophilia.

It is clear from this immediate response that the ground gained by the start of this debate will not be easily lost. Indeed, the speaker uses the strategy of persistence of the focus of perspective, refusing to accept the 'better judgement' of the government official on the meaning of the violence against women as a marginal problem in Poland. She refuses to accept the strategy of evasion while employing irony to undermine it (the assessment of the reply as 'pointed' and 'reliable'). Then she gives further support for her criticism of the Minister's suitability for the conference, implying his homophobic attitudes: *he mistook homosexuality with paedophilia* suggests a conservative attitude of criminalising homosexuality. In this way, the attempt at silencing of this criticism is resisted.

However, the next speaker employs another silencing technique in an attempt to reverse the direction of the debate:

(Utterance 4)

MP Marek Kaczynski:

First of all I would like to heartily thank the Polish delegation for their stance on the plenary session of the UN (Applause)

widely known for his conservative views, he was not 'the best' person to head the delegation.

I would also ask a question: Can the stance which meant supporting the equality, dignity and rights of man and woman in all spheres of life, taking the family as the natural environment for a human being, supporting the right to life from conception to natural death, the right to education, opposing the so called homosexual marriages and opposing abortion- can such a stance shock the Polish society?(...)

The male MP reverses the initial criticism, undermining the insistence of the first speaker that she represents the point of view of the public opinion on the issue, by negating the possibility of a 'shocked' public opinion. This is meant to diminish the initial perspective by delegitimising its initial claim to solidarity of perspective: while the first speaker based her assertion on the claim to represent a 'shocked' public opinion, this speaker also claims that he represents a point of consensus of the majority. The speaker claims solidarity on the issue in his own discursive position by thanking the minister for his stance, and indeed, he achieves support for this as manifested by the applause. He then rephrases the 'content' of the stance represented by the minister as the only possible and only acceptable position. He brings back abortion as the key point of reference for women's issues, but mixes it with liberal feminist pronouncement of 'dignity and rights of man and woman in all spheres of life'. He therefore performs a strategy of domination by co-opting of the counter position and claiming it for his own. This is also seen in the choice of phrases 'the right to education'²⁴⁷ together with and following the pronouncements of 'the right to

²⁴⁷ The right to education of women is not a point of contention here, neither is it similarly a focus of right-wing politics aimed specifically at women. Of course, it sounds acceptable and laudable point to include in order to present this position as concerned with women's issues.

life from conception to natural death', and 'the family as the natural environment for a human being'.

This discrediting of the perspective was at first resisted by the next speaker. In her utterance, she reclaims the legitimacy of her position, by insisting that an even wider notion of public opinion can be used to back up her criticism:

(Utterance 5)

Posel Izabella Sierakowska:

(...) you [the minister] know perfectly well that the group [of countries] among whom was the Polish government, represented by a minister from Solidarity Electoral Action, found itself -as the journalists in New York described it- in an unholy coalition. And who was there, in that unholy coalition -I'll just remind you. Thus, Vatican, where there are no women, Libya, which is known for supporting terrorism, Iran, governed by Islamists, Algeria, moving between a fighting Islam and military dictatorship, fanatically Islamic Sudan and Pakistan, and at present ultra-Catholic Nicaragua. And occasionally this was joined by Cuba. Well, I don't know how did you feel in such company?

Mrs Minister! [directed to The Envoy] I do not expect a response from you. (...)

In this assertion of legitimacy of perspective, the speaker uses the 'international public opinion' by evoking the reactions of New York journalists. Of course, this claim relies on performing a discursive construction of civilisational identity, of 'us' (implying democratic, European, secular states) as opposed to all the countries that are here shown as the 'other': dictatorial, fundamentalist, undemocratic, Islamic or Ultra-Catholic, most of them non-European. Despite the obvious Euro-centric, Western and Christian ('unholy coalition') undertones of such a classification, some

attention is given to how the classification should be read in relation to women's issues: stating exclusion and absence of women ('where there are no women') or implying limitations of women's rights (according to 'general' perception of undemocratic regimes). Nevertheless, the power of asserting one's position is very high in this case, in fact, it is close to the exclusionary rhetoric of a hegemonic perspective: one corresponding to a European, or Western perspective as the only right perspective.²⁴⁸ This utterance is using such strong categorisation for the purpose of employing irony in assessing the delegation's stance: a listener will immediately juxtapose the secular and Europe-oriented rhetoric of the government in many areas of politics with this non-European and fundamentalist perception of women's rights.²⁴⁹

What is also worth noticing is that in this utterance the speaker states that she does not expect an answer, suggesting that there is no real communication possible or that something makes it not worth getting an answer to what is clearly formulated as a question directed at an individual. In this way, the speaker marks her awareness of the artificial character of the situation where the individual under criticism, though present in the room and therefore able to hear the questions, is not responsible for answering them.

²⁴⁸ Indeed, from a feminist standpoint it is the preferred perspective, but it is not a pre-closed singular vision of womanhood. On the other hand using such a simplified counter-argument helps to mask the far more exclusionary and singular position that the hegemonic discourse together with fundamentalist discourses are proposing in relation to women. The argument is possible by the contradictions inherent in the proposed liberal feminist discourse which is arguing for pluralism and tolerance and at the same time having to privilege some discourses over others.

²⁴⁹ Such an assessment is immediately taken up and this position is later characterised by the Envoy as intolerant and 'bordering on racism'.

Interestingly enough, co-optation of feminist discourse was widely used, together with the attempt at exclusion of the points presented, by a strategic redirection of the topic of the debate (topic control):

(Utterance 6)

Posel Jan Kulas:

I understand, Mr Speaker, Mr Minister [directed to minister Kropiwnicki?] that accepted traditional pro-family values cause protest from such MPs as a moment ago...[referring to Izabela Sierakowska] (Izabela Sierakowska from the bench: I adore the family, but what does it have to do with the issue?)

My first question relates to the issue of what positive values, what good changes in the civilisational promotion of Polish women were presented at the conference (for one, the issue of education, which is undoubtedly important) Second question. Did anybody at the conference think about, suggest some methods, resources, ways of increasing the participation of women in the public life, that is, in the Parliament, local governments? I have a feeling the situation was worse while SLD (the Alliance of Democratic Left) was in power.

In this case, the speaker also brings back the 'appropriate' perspective of 'accepted family values' as the right and unproblematic way to deal with women's issues at the conference, (strategy of re-direction of topic) again undermining the solidarity of perspective used by the initial speaker. This is a way of diminishing the criticism as not commonly acceptable, similarly to the previous speaker. Such is the point of the first comment.

However, the female speaker addressed again refutes this attempt to redirect the perspective, and with her inserted question maintains the persistence of focus (as the question of women's rights and women's situation and not a question of family). Then the co-optation of feminist issues such as women's education and share of power in government is performed by putting the issues forward as the concern of the speaker (and, by extension, his party as can be implied by the subsequent criticism of the left-wing party previously in government). This concern implies criticism of the conference, doubting whether issues of promotion and education of women were considered at all. The exclusionary source of position is signalled in the phrase 'civilisational promotion of women' implying that women are backward and uncivilised.²⁵⁰

In this utterance, not only elements of the feminist discourse are co-opted, the whole debates shifts from any discussion of women's issues in relation to the conference to the discussion of the inadequacy of the left-wing political forces. Of course, the discourse of party politics is widely employed in this context to dominate as well as to resist, as will be pointed out in other contributions.

The negation of the counter discourse's insistence on representing women's standpoint on women's issues and women's solidarity (a denial of the persistency of perspective) is further performed by the following speaker:

²⁵⁰ This phrase discloses a patriarchal discourse on civilisation as a male achievement, to which

(Utterance 7)

MP Czeslaw Ryszka:

There appeared a statement [in the debate] that Polish society, that women's organisations voiced a disapproval towards the Polish delegation, lead by Mr minister Jerzy Kropiwnicki. As far as I know, the Federation of Catholic Women, a very numerous organisation, maybe the most numerous, voiced approval for Mr Minister. Unless, it's some different women...

(a voice from the benches: Not Polish ones)

Well, maybe not Polish ones, because the Polish ones belong only to SLD [The Alliance of Democratic Left]

Here, the validity of the claim to solidarity²⁵¹ is undermined and, subsequently, the women who voiced the criticism of the minister are problematised as 'not Polish' and 'leftist' (with the interactive help of another MP's intrusion). The contradictory propositions that this collaborative speech makes are interesting: Polish women equals Catholic women (i.e. those who supported the delegation) but also Polish women 'only belong to SLD'.²⁵² This contradiction probably shows the awareness of the struggle over the allowed femininities that is taking place in this particular discursive moment, but also mirrors wider changes underway in Polish society. It exposes the battle over the categorisation of women at the intersection of gender, nationality and political allegiance: from this position women need to be Catholic and conservative (right-wing) to be 'truly' Polish. At the same time, the recognition

women can only aspire.

is there that Polish women increasingly support the political left (perceived as the closest to feminist views). The purpose is to problematise the Polishness of such women and to diminish their input into the debate. Therefore, it is a strategy of the diminishing of the position represented by the initial speaker and those sharing her position. Of course, this actual stretch is also incoherent and, at the same time, can be read as sarcastic, both of which show the degree to which the categorisation underway here is a point of a heated struggle, not a point of negotiation.

Nevertheless, this strategy of diminishing and problematising Polish women using the Catholic-nationalist discourse is being resisted in the next utterance:

(Utterance 8)

MP, Bronisława Kowalska:

Mr MP [Czesław Ryszka], I think that, fortunately, not everything in Poland must be Catholic and that is the whole victory of our democracy.

(...)Mr Minister. In Poland there is no lack of intelligent women, as can be seen in this chamber, and so, don't you think that women should most often give voice on women [issues]?

In this utterance, apart from resisting the strategy of the diminishing of the woman's voice in this debate, the speaker also clearly and, for the first time, openly asserts the gendered nature of the problem. The point is put across that it is not just the

²⁵¹ Referring to the initial voice in the debate, and to the further interdiscursively evoked texts such as the open letter of women's organisations and some newspaper reports.

²⁵² The Alliance of Democratic Left, the main left-wing party.

conservative views, or lack of knowledge that made the minister the wrong representative at the conference, but his gender as well (specifying that there would have been numerous women better prepared for the job). This point refers to the exclusion of women's voices from the debate and possibly a strategic diminishing of women's issues by the choice of (this particular) male head of delegation. Thus, the exclusion and silencing is resisted by being named. Importantly, the speaker does not say that women should always discuss issues related to women, and she does not say that any woman could do it (as is implied by the statement that 'there is no lack of intelligent women').

This proposition later gets argumentatively redefined by a male MP:

(Utterance 14)

MP Jozef Korpak:

At the beginning, I would like to disagree with the statement which appeared here, that only women should speak about women and men about men. Personally, I believe that it should not be like this, definitely not.

(a voice from the benches: Discrimination)

I'd like to ask two questions. Firstly, do those persons who, at present, are criticising Mr minister Kropiwnicki, that is mainly the Parliamentary Women's Group promote equating of the rights of homosexual relationships with the rights of married couples, not excluding even the right to the adoption of children by such relationships?

And second question. Is it not hypocritical, according to Mrs minister [the Envoy], to voice criticisms about hiding the violence in the family in a situation when in the media such violence is present everyday, and those parties that are represented by you [the Parliamentary Women's Group] do

nothing to change this state of affairs, so that there would not be this violence in the media?
(Applause)

When the gendered aspect of the situation is raised (by reference to the silencing of women's voices/representation), the argument is immediately undermined (diminished) as not right and not desirable. There are two important aspects to this strategy. First of all, the speaker strategically diminishes the argument by overgeneralising it so that it appears out of all proportions, as if it suggested that only women should talk about women's issues and men should only talk about men's. The qualification 'in most cases' that appeared in the original is strategically lost and substituted by 'only'. Secondly, any reference to the context of the conference on women is lost. The initial point becomes more ridiculous when redefined as if stating 'women should talk always about women and men about men'. This speaker co-opts liberal discourse of gender-neutral representation, the voice of 'liberal principles' to exclude the gendered criticism.²⁵³ As a result, misrepresenting women ceases to be the point of criticism.

The immediate reaction coming from the room (an MP shouting: 'discrimination') may be understood as resisting this redefinition through a strategy of the persistence of focus. It suggests the silencing of women (discrimination) is the key problem, not the preservation of the mask of gender-neutral discussion. The argument of the speaker, 'both genders have a voice', is here exposed as 'discriminating', or

²⁵³ Of course, this argument also redefines the criticism of the already gendered (men-dominated) representation as if it was a criticism of a gender-neutral reality.

oppressive because it masks the reality of men's dominance and women's exclusion in having equal access to voicing their interests. Here, we have an example of exclusion being named and meta-discursively resisted.²⁵⁴

The further two questions of the speaker represent a direct move at securing the power of the hegemonic discourse and silencing the initial criticisms by undermining two of its content areas (redirection of the focus - topic control). First, the point about the delegation (the minister himself) negating the women's rights to sexual orientation is here upheld, by directly negating a conception of such rights, making them unacceptable by picking up the most 'controversial' aspect of these rights (adoption of children by homosexual couples).²⁵⁵ Homophobic attitudes are thus clearly asserted as the heterosexual norm and are upheld as nonnegotiable. Having thus silenced the position which argues for even a limited conceptualisation of such rights, the speaker then undermines another important area of dissent: the conceptualisation of domestic violence against women. He achieves this by redirecting the discursive focus away from a critique of the family (which in this discursive position is unproblematic and ideologically positive) to the 'appropriate' area of concern about violence: the media. This is another ideologically loaded domain, where violent representation in films and the press is to be perceived as a 'real' problem (mainly a problem for the 'morality' of women and children). But in

²⁵⁴ On the other hand, it is possible that the shout actually supported the speaker's statement, i.e. suggested that if women were to speak about women it would be a discrimination of the other gender's right to speak. This contradictory interpretation seems less likely.

²⁵⁵ Such a definition of 'rights of homosexual relationships' negates any possibility of considering less disputable issues, such as social security, taxes or inheritance problems that might have otherwise been redefined.

this situation, it is primarily evoked to undermine the legitimacy of the initial arguments as related to women's issues, where violence was perceived primarily in relation to women's material existence in the family.

The exclusion of women's legitimate voices is also aided by a trivialisation of the gendered aspect of the debate. Interestingly enough, this is achieved by celebrating the masculinity of the male involved:

(Utterance 16)

Maria Smreczynska (The Government Envoy for Family):

(...)I have to say that after these various mispleasures that happened to the Polish delegation- not deservedly- we have received information [comments] from the parliamentarians of the European Union, that the chief of the Polish delegation was a real man. (Applause) (...)

While asserting the support of other parliamentarians, the speaker is claiming that the support consisted in praising the masculinity of the criticised politician. That calling someone 'a real man' is considered a valid point to uphold his authority in this situation is important to note. The phrase 'a real man' suggests toughness and chivalry, the appreciated heterosexual masculine characteristics. It appears from the statement that being 'a real man' is both enough to represent women and, in this instance, goes hand in hand with having conservative views about women's rights and sexual minority rights (here homophobic attitudes are unproblematic). This understanding is supplied by earlier discussions of what constituted this 'masculine'

performance of the minister. What is most telling, this particular heterosexual appreciation is offered by a female politician given the responsibility to defend the male minister's performance from the 'attacks' of female parliamentarians.

The 'humorous' element of this gendered reading of the situation is then picked up by the Vice Speaker²⁵⁶ in order to diminish the tone of the debate even further:

(Exchange 2)

Vice Speaker:

Thank you Mrs Minister [the envoy]

I am also not ashamed of being a man (Cheerfulness in the room, applause)

This remark provides a humorous tone to the debate, with the speaker stating the obvious, in a way as if to suggest that masculinity had been the point of criticism. This is a strategic redirection of the argument, suggesting that the point of argument was that men should be ashamed of being men (a listener will here quickly supply the stereotypical view that the feminist politicians are men-haters, and are wanting to discredit or eradicate masculinity itself, rather than the forms of power exercised by men). Such a statement is also 'funny' as can be judged by the applause and cheerfulness of MPs: a trivialisation of the whole debate is thus achieved.

²⁵⁶ At that time, (during the envoys utterance) another Vice Speaker takes over the debate. This is his first statement in this debate.

Interestingly, the assertion of masculinity in this situation is amusing only in a situation where masculine speakers normally pose as gender-neutral politicians (with the authority over the representation of women's interests).²⁵⁷

However, to claim that it is the only right-wing politicians and the controllers of the discursive situation that are guilty of trivialising women's concerns in this situation would not present the whole picture. Occasionally, the male politicians that get involved in the criticism of the hegemonic position do so by employing equally exclusionary discourse themselves. In this debate, one such voice is also present:

(Utterance 10)

MP Wojciech Nowaczyk:

(...) And a question: did the minister want to endear himself to the right-wing government orientation with his position [at the conference].

Next question: Was it for this obedience that he was rewarded by the prime minister with a minister's position? Doesn't Mr Minister Kropiwnicki as a man fear the revenge of women for that, in a typical feminine way?

(MP Edward Wende: That is an epoch-making question)

In this set of questions, posed early on in the debate, a male politician starts from within a party politics discourse of alliances and rewards for the presented views and he ends up with a question which degrades and delegitimises the critique offered by women at the beginning of the debate. It need hardly be pointed out that the

²⁵⁷ Unfortunately, as we had seen in earlier examples women, are not similarly allowed to celebrate their femininity in this context.

stereotyping and insulting characterisation of women's possible reaction to the problem as 'a revenge in a typical feminine way' discloses highly exclusionary and patriarchal discourse. The comment is insulting enough to be ridiculed by another politician who ironically sums up the last question as 'epoch-making'. It is indeed important to notice, as such moments disclose the exclusionary and diminishing intent of some politicians who pay lip service to women's discursive positions, while being far from a position of solidarity or even understanding of these positions.²⁵⁸

We can already see at this stage that the gendered aspect of the debate is raised but then successfully ridiculed and silenced in numerous ways. Most noticeably, the political discourse predominates in the discussion of the problem and it finally overshadows it. Here is a further example:

(Utterance 13)

MP Jan Kasprzyk

In relation to the above I'd like to ask Mr Minister, why in the makeup of the delegation there was no representative of the opposition, not even of moderate [opposition] for you?

My second question is connected with a certain answer to the colleagues from AWS.²⁵⁹ If the majority of the society shared your views there would be 460 of you in this room [the total number of parliamentary seats] (applause)

In relation to the above, I'd like to ask, as nobody in this room can speak of total support, and so various views are being represented/

²⁵⁸ This is by no means true in all the cases of male politicians taking up the 'women's voice'. Some of the male contributions to various debates I have studied identified with women's position and even with feminist critiques of the society.

²⁵⁹ Solidarity Electoral Action: a coalition of right wing parties.

(A voice from the benches: *As for now we are in government*)

/You have rightly said: as for now.

The remark of this speaker still implies the connection between the content of the views represented at the conference (views on women's issues) and the political parties which the members of the delegation represented: that is the 'conservative' versus the 'liberal' or 'progressive' views. But slowly, the debate is turned into a discursive battle over political power. That the political power is paramount to the power to define what counts as women's interest is implied by the assertion: *'If the majority of the society shared your views there would be 460 of you in this room'* and the subsequent non-verbal response of applause. The intruded remark is quite interesting in that it is an even more explicit assertion of the power to define, and we have to bear in mind what is being defined, that is, what counts as legitimate women's issues and human rights issues.²⁶⁰ We are witnessing here one of many moments when this battle for meaning is acknowledged to be a direct consequence of political divisions. In this respect, women are again silenced: they are excluded from speaking as women on women. There is no space to speak from without the political identification; their concerns are clearly subordinate to party politics and, in this institution can only be voiced as part of party politics.

Apart from the redirection of the argumentation away from women's concerns into the discourse of political party competition and the subsequent silencing of any

²⁶⁰ In this case, especially the issue of freedom of sexual orientation, judging from the previous utterances.

debate on what counts as women's issues and women's representation, we must point here to another important resource that can be used for such exclusionary mechanisms. This is the omnipresent redirection of the discussion of women's issues into the abortion debate. Of course, this equation is important for the construction of the 'appropriate femininity' which is ongoing here, but the resource is being used also to exclude any other, less controllable, topics and voices in the debate. Such redirection occurs already early on in the debate:

(Utterance 12)

MP Jacek Szczot:

Mr minister, recently the press office of the UN made a report from the speech of Mr minister and there was a phrase [stating] as if Poland supported human life from his (sic!) birth to death. I don't know if this was Mr minister's statement or the official government's position? It is known, though, that in accordance with the Polish law the limits of life are completely different in Poland.

(...) And third question, a short one. What public opinion [was shocked]? Is really Polish public opinion shocked by the statement and the appearance of the Polish delegation in New York? Isn't this a simple manipulation of the frustrated feminist groups? Thank you. (applause)

(MP Bronislawa Kowalska: Radio Mary will give you a good campaign)

The first 'question' brings the whole debate into the discursive domain of abortion, using a criticism of a formulation that was used in the Internet report from the minister's speech. This constitutes another moment exposing the discursive battle over femininity where abortion is the main battlefield, the very centre of the exclusionary discourse. But it is important to notice that this discursive move into the

'appropriate' understanding of human life as starting from conception, and not birth,²⁶¹ is more than an invocation of the exclusionary discourse. In this context, it is a powerful way of silencing of other contributions and points made earlier related to women's issues. And, put in these terms, similarly to the problematisation of the rights of homosexuals, it silences any move at renegotiating women's reproductive rights.²⁶² This is a particularly intricate mechanism of topic control by insisting on some particularly 'nonnegotiable' definition as the core of the focus of the debate.

Argumentatively, this also provides a justification for the final question in this utterance which undermines and diminishes public opinion evoked by the initial criticism. Although the phrase 'Polish public opinion' had initially been used, it is perceived as relating to Polish *women's* opinion here. Furthermore, the stereotypical insulting characterisation of the women concerned as 'the frustrated feminist groups' is about diminishing such a subject position, dismissing it as not relevant, or outside of what might constitute an 'acceptable' public opinion. This discursive power to diminish by an insult is resisted by the female MP, who, in her intrusive remark, counter-diminishes the speaker's standpoint by ascribing it to the ultra-conservative Catholic radio station which would cherish similar views.²⁶³ This exchange marks the core of the struggle again, as the struggle over 'legitimate' representation of women (and of morality, the state, the civil dialogue). The redirection of the debate

²⁶¹ A question far more problematic, as it is not defined as such in the Constitution, but in the anti-abortion bill.

²⁶² The assertion of the 'limits of life in Poland' as different from those in other countries goes back to the very centre of the hegemonic discourse's power to define/create reality.

into 'abortion domain' raised by this speaker is successful: in the end of the debate it is his question that is addressed by the Envoy as the very last one.

Perhaps the most telling example of exclusion within this particular discursive situation is another exchange with the Vice Speaker, where an exclusion of the counter-discourse is again achieved by the control of the terms of access:

(Exchange 3)

Vice Speaker:

The time assigned for questions in current affairs has been filled up. The parliament thus finishes the discussion of this point of the daily agenda. Unfortunately, according to the regulations the time has been exceeded by fifteen minutes.

(MP Wojciech Nowaczyk: We have not received an answer.)

Vice Speaker: *I can do nothing about that.*

Mrs minister wanted to add something? Please.

The Envoy:

I'd like to answer Mr MP Kasprzyk, that the situation of county centres for family help was not the subject of the discussion at this conference, so I think that we can talk about it on another occasion. Indeed, there are reports that this [help] has already started to function.

Vice Speaker: *Thank you very much*

(a voice from the room: the Internet page...)

The Envoy for Family Affairs:

The Internet page- Indeed there occurred a mistake on the Internet page made by the employees of the United Nations. There was a letter filed by the chief of the Polish delegation asking for correcting

²⁶³ Radio Mary, is a religious, Catholic station, far from a widely accepted voice of 'public opinion'. It is considered to be ultra-nationalist and fundamentalist and on the other hand is increasingly supporting right-wing political parties.

this and today the Internet page is corrected and the statements are correct, so there is no mistake there now.

The Vice Speaker: *I cannot allow further discussion. I have closed that point, I have to stick to the regulations. (Applause)*

In this exchange it is vital to notice the mechanism of direct exclusion (the cutting off of further debate by the Vice Speaker) and the differentiated terms of access of speakers representing two sides in the debate. It is worth noticing that the point raised by one of the male MPs, stating that they 'have not received an answer' [presumably to the criticism of the Polish representation at the conference] is simply refuted as beyond the Speaker's ability to deal with: 'I can do nothing about that'. The two other questions that are allowed to be answered by the Envoy represent questions in no way connected to the initial criticism of the Polish delegation at the conference. The first answered question marks a successful redirection, in the course of the debate, of problems of violence as addressed by 'centres for family help'-successfully defined as a problem of the family, not a gender issue.

The last question that the envoy answers at the very end of the debate re-establishes the power of the hegemonic discourse in dictating the subject matter worth a serious report: the problem of the protection of life from conception, regardless of women's interests.²⁶⁴ Nowhere in the end of the debate is any deliberation of the points raised initially present. More importantly, women's voices about how their issues were (and should have been) constructed are no longer addressed.

The exclusionary end of the debate in relation to the terms of access, is also revealed in the last statement of the Vice Speaker. The silencing has been achieved by referring to the institutional discourse of the Parliament as a legitimate reason for ending the debate, regardless of whose questions were and were not answered. The purpose of this last move at domination is recognised and supported by the ensuing applause. The decision to end the debate is applauded, which suggests that there is more meaning to it than simply successful control of the institutional proceedings. It is possible that the direction into which the debate went (which is away from the initial concerns) is accepted by some MPs as a victory and therefore applauded. This moment clearly shows the exclusionary discourse in a winning position. At the same time it points out that there was a real struggle indeed, not just a defence of a secure position.

On a more general level, the exclusionary character of the institutional practice of a 'parliamentary debate' is exposed here. The message coming out of the Vice Speaker's evocation of the 'rules of conduct' is not so much that fair and controlled exchange of ideas is the purpose of a parliament, but that the true purpose is the securing of political power. That is, the rules are there to be broken but the issue is who is allowed to break them. That the government official is given the last word on the matter is to be expected as part of the hierarchical organisation of this institutional context. What is more telling, she does not use her last contributions to

²⁶⁴ As part of the ministers' statement at the conference, quoted on the Internet.

address the initial grievances to which answers are still being demanded. These go unnoticed and are dismissed by the Vice Speaker as impossible to answer, and unworthy of further discussion time.

In the case of this parliamentary debate, none of the criticisms raised strongly by the counter-discourse was allowed to shift the balance of power over representation, though the struggle over meaning was very pronounced. Despite numerous powerful moves of the counter-discourse into this debate (following a successful launch of it), the hegemonic discourse successfully regains its dominant position through the strategies of exclusion (mainly through topic control), diminishing, and occasionally co-opting of some of the areas of the feminist critique. It seems safe to state, that the hegemonic power over the representation of women (in discursive and political terms) is successfully silenced, though not without a hard struggle for retaining the dominant position's legitimacy.

5.4 Summary: assessing the power struggle between discourses in the process of the debate

In this analysis, I was concerned with the understanding of discourse as a process in order to answer Research Question 2: How can the power struggle between the two discourses on women be captured in the course of a political debate? (How can the interaction of different subject positions either secure and subvert domination?)

In general, the power struggle could be captured well in my example of a particular parliamentary debate: one of the positions represented challenged and the other maintained the hegemony over the representation of women.²⁶⁵ The outcome of my analysis suggests that despite the unstable position of the hegemonic discourse on women, it is being successfully maintained as the 'right' way of constructing women in the Polish political sphere. And, indeed, the parliamentary debate I have analysed here presents such a moment of hegemony (dominance) being re-established. Yet, this position needed to be fought over, as the counter-discourse demanded a re-negotiation of the dominant meanings. This demand manifests a degree of power as well: the power to resist, and, potentially, transform the dominant representations. In the course of this debate the counter discourse is successfully silenced, but the preserved domination is shown to be temporary and precarious, which in no way diminishes its negative effect for possible alternative discourses on women.

The more specific research questions concerned the mechanisms of securing such power in the discursive process. The two questions stated:

R.Q.2.1 How, on the level of interaction, does the dominant discourse exclude the counter-discourse or dominate the process of constructing the meanings of femininity?

²⁶⁵ Both in the political and discursive sense of representation.

R.Q.2.2 How does the counter-discourse resist and subvert the domination in order to open space for the negotiation of the meanings of femininity?

The feminist linguistic conceptualisation of the mechanisms of domination and resistance proved an adequate tool to capture these mechanisms. As far as answering R.Q.2.1 is concerned, the following mechanisms were observed and discussed in this analysis:

1. **Exclusion through non-response.** In most cases this was done by a strategic redirection of the focus of the debate (a form of **topic control**): a refusal to maintain the proposed focus and an introduction of other subject areas. Examples of this strategy include: Utterance 6, Utterance 7, Exchange 2 (Vice Speaker), Utterance 12, Exchange 3 (the Envoy).
2. **Exclusion through control of terms of access.** Usually carried out by the Vice Speakers by cutting off particular speakers and ending the whole debate, such as in Exchange 1 and Exchange 3. Similarly, exclusion through interruption, seen particularly in the initial exchange with the Vice Speaker (Exchange 1) belongs to this category.
3. **Diminishing/ trivialisation by insults, humour and irony.** This strategy was as common as topic control, it involved the Vice Speaker (Exchange 2) and some of the speakers: Utterance 7, Utterance 16, Utterance 12, as well as non-verbal response by other MPs ('cheerfulness', 'applause').

4. **Co-opting of discourse.** This strategy was present in several contributions by appropriating some areas of focus of the counter-discourse. This was particularly visible in Utterance 4, Utterance 6, Utterance 14.

These mechanisms were carried out in the actual process of the debate, in the end allowing to maintain the powerful/dominated position of this particular perspective. However, it has to be noted that the battle was still over the content of the dominant constructions of femininity: it was the fight over the representational elements of discourse that was embedded into the interactive moves. The aim was securing the power over discourse (on women) also through the power over the terms of access to the discursive situation itself. Moreover, the multifunctionality of these moves has to be mentioned, any utterance can and usually does carry out more than one function: a part of an utterance might be diminishing while another one might be co-opting. Also, the same part might potentially carry out several functions, therefore the interpretation of them will always be incomplete and potentially open to critique. However, by using the methodology of a feminist linguistic critique, the analysis hoped to pinpoint some of the most important aspects of power play in this discursive event.

As regards answering R.Q.2.2, some attempts at empowerment, or strategies of resistance, were found as a direct response to the strategies of domination. Yet, they also represented more than that: they were at the same time assertions of the alternative position's power to define women in ways other than the dominant ones.

As far as the actual interactive situation studied is concerned, the following strategies could be found:

1. **Persistence of the focus of perspective:** subverting attempts of redirection of the topic of debate, voicing of the excluded position: Utterance 3, intrusions to Utterance 7 and Utterance 14.
2. **Solidarity of perspective:** claiming legitimacy of perspective, naming the attempts at diminishing their legitimacy. This was done, for instance, in Utterance 1 (the claim to solidarity put forward) and Utterance 5.
3. **Challenging the terms of access:** demanding more inclusion into the interaction, resisting control over the floor time, resisting the manipulation of the debate. Examples of this include Exchange 1, Utterance 3, Exchange 3.
4. **Counter-diminishing by irony:** while humour was not found in my examples, suggesting that its use would be self-diminishing and threatening the legitimacy (seriousness) of the argument, elements of irony were present in Utterance 1, Utterance 3, Utterance 3, Utterance 5, intrusion to Utterance 12.

All in all, the strategies of domination were being answered with varying degrees of strength and success by the strategies of resistance. The most difficult to find was resistance to the strategies of co-optation: since this strategy appropriates the meanings that are acceptable for the counter-discourse; only upon an in-depth reflection on the motivations of particular positions/utterances could such a reaction

be possible. In this context, I have not noticed clear examples of the resistance to co-optation.

The general outcome of my study is the assertion that resistance demands a form of meta-discursive awareness: it requires the ability to judge the discursive process and voice such judgements. The perceiving, naming and commenting on domination strategies is seen particularly in moments when the key discursive aspects of the battle over content or over the terms of access are exposed. The very launch of the debate (and the content of the criticism) is a form of such meta-discursive evaluation turned into discursive action, other moments include Utterance 3, Utterance 8, Utterance 12. Of course, meta-discursivity was also used by the hegemonic discourse to maintain its power, especially in assessing the challenging position as a 'manipulation' (of 'public opinion', of 'accepted values', of the 'rules of conduct').

All in all, it can be stated that the battle over the power in discourse in this particular situation is quite pronounced but the hegemonic discourse 'wins'; the dominating strategies are successful, as the initial criticism of the government delegation is completely silenced. In this debate, the 'appropriate femininity' is obviously being fought over, and for the time being, maintained, with all the discursive and (potential non-discursive) effects of such a development temporarily upheld. The very concrete critique of the representation of women's issues is refuted and, in consequence, so are the possibilities of a redefinition in the representation of women's reproductive rights, women's (and men's) right to express their sexual orientation, and the

political representation of women's interests. As a result, also the material interests of women who do not fit the obligatory heterosexuality or obligatory maternity upheld here are compromised.

CONCLUSION

How we understand sexual difference determines the type of society that we will find possible, appropriate or desirable.²⁶⁶

1. *A review of the theoretical background and the aims of the thesis*

This thesis begins with an inquiry into the concept of 'women's language', first as a sociolinguistic area of research and then as a feminist linguistic concern. However, after a careful investigation of the more recent feminist theories on language and gender and the poststructuralist approaches to language in general, I pursue the approach that 'women's language' amounts to a complex ideological construct of femininity. This understanding follows an investigation of the existing theories on the power of/in language as a central issue for feminist linguistics and feminist theory in general. This approach is then pursued further: discourse of women is theorised as 'discourse on women'. Therefore, linguistic theorisations of women's language are seen as part of the ongoing construction of gender difference, which comes to embody what women are by recounting the 'difference' in communication (easily implying a difference in reasoning, argumentation, abilities, etc.). As Deborah

²⁶⁶ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 91

Cameron pointed out 'it could be that "the problem of women's speech" is a figure for the problem of femininity in a world where gendered identities are increasingly unstable.'²⁶⁷

This theoretical approach is then pursued further by the use of theories that explore the workings of power and ideology in discourse understood not as linguistic production only but as a form of semiosis working in a social context and amounting to an ongoing construction as well as a performance of the acceptable social relations. In this way, an understanding of the various 'discourses on women' as constructions on femininity is formed. The various poststructuralist discourse theories are a useful tool in theorising such gender constructions in social communication. This is why poststructuralist, feminist and critical approaches to discourse are examined. The Critical Discourse Analysis' theorisation of the dialectical functioning of discourse as both social action and its representation is a particularly useful definition of discourse that I have adopted in this thesis. My aim has been to try to combine such an understanding of discourse with the general feminist interest in gender and social life and with the feminist linguistic exploration of the relations of domination in interaction.

My aim has been to use these theories to study the discourses on women in the Polish political sphere. This meant finding the theoretical and methodological tools that would be suitable for my investigation of the parliamentary debates and that

²⁶⁷ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 202.

would allow me to make some substantiated observations on the workings of power and ideology in this discursive location. I have concentrated my analysis on the concepts of categories, frames and repertoires, which I found particularly useful in illustrating the power of discourse seen as text (without forgetting the dynamic and performative character of such constructions). It has to be noted here, that all the possible aspects of categorisation, the relationship between categories and discourses, or the exact difference between frames (conceived here as narratives or simply discourses) and repertoires (understood as more abstract thematic choices) will need further theoretical work, which is outside the scope of this thesis.

On the other hand, I have also adopted some analytical tools used by feminist linguistics which aim to study the workings of power in interactions, be it verbal or mediated ones. These I have called strategies of domination and resistance, and I have applied them to the analysis of discourse seen as a process (without ignoring its textual character). Of course, my use of this type of feminist linguistic analysis of interactions was limited by the type of material I chose to analyse (available to me in a mediated form), the type of research questions I tried to answer (which were quite general and exploratory rather than narrow) and the scope of this thesis.

However, despite these limitations I was able to point to two kinds of power play in my material: struggles over the content (representational function) of discourse and over the terms of access to discourse. This supports the critical theorisation of discourse offered by Fairclough who points to 'struggles in and over discourse as a

focus for an ideologically-oriented discourse analysis'.²⁶⁸ Similarly, his earlier theorisation of power *in* discourse as: 'controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants'²⁶⁹ as opposed to power *behind* discourse: for example seen in discourse types understood as effects of power²⁷⁰ can be explored by the type of analysis I undertook.

In this thesis I have tried to consider theoretical and methodological tools available in order to make a clear statement of how the discourses on femininity I was analysing are constructed and argued for without overgeneralising them. I did not want to make vague statements or descriptions about the symbolic understanding of women in Poland, or even in the Polish political language using the popular notion of 'discourse analysis' which amounts to a haphazard and often unfocused reinterpretation of given texts. On the other hand, I hope that my work does not, as Michael Billig put it: 'pronounce on the nature of discourses, without getting-down to the business of what is actually uttered or written'.²⁷¹ Instead, I concentrated on particular texts chosen from a larger studied material in order to investigate the discourses on women in the Polish political debates.

²⁶⁸ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 87.

²⁶⁹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), 46.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁷¹ Michael Billig, 'Whose terms? Whose ordinariness? Rhetoric and ideology in conversational analysis' *Discourse and Society* 10 (40), 545.

2. *A summary of the research on the power struggle in discourse*

My analysis aimed at answering the following general questions on power in discourse of the studied texts/interactions:

R.Q.1 How can the effects of power struggle be captured in the construction of discourses on women in the political debates?

R.Q. 2 How can the power struggle between the two discourses on women be captured in the course of a political debate?

The understanding of discourse as a (textual) construction was employed to answer the first research question and the perspective of discourse as a process was adopted in order to answer the second one. As far as the perspective of discourse as text is concerned, it allowed me to pinpoint the effects of the power to define, which are already inscribed (and being re-inscribed) into discursive positions. The analysis of two parliamentary debates in Chapter 4 discloses a struggle over the meanings of femininity to be codified into legal provisions. The representatives of one ideological position maintained hegemonic notions of femininity through interpretive choices such as the use of specific categories, frames and repertoires. The produced discourse constructed a very exclusionary and traditional notion of the 'ideal' or 'desirable femininity' though it also managed to co-opt some of the elements of the counter position, if they were not perceived as completely threatening the hegemonic position. The counter discourse was not only resisting the dominant categorisations, but it was also undertaking a similar construction of femininity, though one where

there was more space for definitions of women in relation to work, experience of discrimination or violence, and equal rights, going beyond the 'obligatory motherhood' as the dominant categorisation of women.

The second analytical chapter (Chapter 5) relied on the understanding of discourse as a process, in order to capture what was previously left outside of the analysis: the power play in the interactive process studied within a more contextual framework. This analysis aimed at pinpointing possible mechanisms of the power struggle between the represented positions, both as a struggle over content and terms of access. I have utilised the feminist linguistic theorisation of the mechanisms of domination and resistance in interactions to study the process of a parliamentary debate on gender. Various strategies of domination were seen throughout the debate (such as exclusion, diminishing, co-opting) but strategies of resistance could be pointed out too, suggesting possibilities for opening up the public space to the articulation of women's interests: for example, demands for inclusion and accountability were made. Interestingly, the co-optation of the resisting position was performed by certain speakers, and this strategy was not successfully answered.

Yet, the parliament's highly exclusionary character makes it a difficult fighting ground when it comes to negotiating with and subverting the dominant notions of femininity as all the debates analysed in the previous chapters show. These debates are important to study not only because they come from a particularly exclusionary institution when it comes to 'women' issues', but because they have real effects for

non-discursive practices. As long as a particular hegemonic representation of women is maintained in this sphere, there are direct consequences for the material reality of women's lives. Abortion is the key issue here, but so is maternity leave, economic conditions of working women, the legal status of homosexual women, and many other areas of women's existence and self perception.

The analysis I carried out leads to a general conclusion that there is indeed scope for theorising and researching the hegemonic power in discourse. This is the power to define in the sense of maintaining control over the representation of reality, a closure of meaning, or simply meaning control. It is exercised on the level of text and the discursive process simultaneously. That is, a closure of the acceptable meanings, subject positions, conceptualisations is carried out by the interpretative choices within the content of discourse, while at the same time the negotiation of meaning is prevented by a control over the interaction process, where alternative positions are silenced and excluded while the dominant, the 'right' position is continually put forward. It is interesting to note, that the hegemonic discourse on women serves not only the construction of women as it is favoured by the state at the time, but it is a way of defining the state itself through instrumental uses of gender. Gendered discourses become signifiers of the construction of national identity/nationalism as well can symbolise the political identity of the speakers. In my analysis, it was obvious that the debates around gender have a function of marking political positions as 'left' or 'right'. More generally, the understanding of the state, relations of citizens to the state and appropriate scope of politics to intervene in the life of

citizens were being constructed. It is in this sense that Gal and Kligman argue that there is much more to political debates on reproduction than just controlling women's sexual behaviour or defining the boundaries of the acceptable femininity:

We have found that in case after case, debates about reproduction can be understood as coded discussions about claims to political legitimacy. More precisely, the issue of reproduction is one of the means by which morality and desirability of political institutions is imagined, and claims for the "goodness" of state forms are made. This use of debates about reproduction as an allegorical, indirect way of talking about the political future is by no means peculiar to postsocialist transformations.²⁷²

This understanding of the functions of the political discourse on reproduction could be extended to other gender-centred debates, like the ones I have analysed in this thesis. However, my main aim at this stage was to concentrate on the constructions of femininity rather than on notions of the state, nation, and the politics itself. This, of course, does have some significance for further research into the gendered constructions of politics.

The notion of discourse utilised here makes space for the conceptualisation of resistance and social change, not just of domination through discursive practices. Indeed, it turns out that the hegemonic power of closure of meaning may be successfully resisted by the demand for inclusion, again, working both on the level of content and the process of meaning creation/negotiation. The difficulty in asserting

that such a power is not the hegemonic one is great. In order to be a resisting type of power, the position or discourse it constructs needs to be self-reflexive and open up space for new meanings, without securing them into another hegemonic position. This difficulty is connected with the feminist agenda for empowerment which is not to be 'power over' others. This problem is particularly visible in my examples of parliamentary discourse, which usually lead to particularly exclusionary practices. Nevertheless, its importance and potential for achieving positive change should not be underestimated, precisely because an engagement with power is necessary to transform the existing power relations. Whether the sort of liberal feminist discourse represented by the MPs in the Polish parliament constitutes a non-exclusionary women's discourse is not certain. The point is that resistance must work towards a positive transformation of the social relations as well as of the politics on women. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough state 'whether articulatory shifts in discourse constitute substantive shifts in identity or resistance to domination depends (...) on how the moment of discourse is inserted in the social process overall (...).'²⁷³ Similarly, Weedon points out: 'The degree to which marginal discourses can increase their social power is governed by the wider context of social interests and power within which challenges to the dominant are made.'²⁷⁴ While there are indeed signs of change in the Polish politics²⁷⁵, whether it will be a positive and substantial for women is still to be seen.

²⁷² Susan Gal and Gail Kligman *The Politics of Gender After Socialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 28.

²⁷³ Chouliaraki and Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University press, 1999), 14.

²⁷⁴ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 80

²⁷⁵ See the postscript.

3. *Strengths and limitations of the analysis*

First of all, the starting point for my analysis has been the generalisation that there are distinct ideological positions present in the discursive events studied, and that they can be seen as the hegemonic discourse and the counter-discourse. Such an assumption was made on the basis of the theoretical background and previous research into the gendered political debates, where two distinct positions were observed. My initial assessment of the research material I gathered supported this direction. Nevertheless, it represents a generalisation of a complex and fluid set of possible discursive positions and power relations.

Yet, in order to substantiate such claims and arrive at any generalisations about the content of discourses or their ideological investment, an analysis of a range of texts taken from a particular discursive location was required. This is why I have decided to include two debates in my analysis of discourse as a text in Chapter 4, recognising that it is not a comprehensive study of all the possible aspects of the discourses on women coming from this sphere. Still, such an analysis is more exploratory than one that covers only a single discursive event. Moreover, it has to be pointed out that this choice meant that other aspects of discourse, such as various aspects of context and interactive process were not discussed.

Of course, even the main discourses themselves are very complex in their content; the potential for an analysis of textual elements is inexhaustible, which is why I

decided to pay special attention to categories, frames and repertoires within the framework of argumentation. Moreover, it has to be understood that the discourses on women are constantly evolving and undergoing transformations; the discursive creation of femininity is ongoing. However, there are still strands to be identified in a particular chunk of data, which make it possible to pinpoint the ideological investment of the main positions. I have used these categories in order to explore the question of the effects of power in discourse. Of course, the analysis aimed at a partial, exploratory answer only, not at a closure of the 'problem', and that is all it could possibly have hoped to achieve.

On the other hand, when I concentrated on the interactive process in the second analytical chapter, it was in the hope of providing a balanced inquiry into the working of power in discourse seen on the level of actual interaction. This was to explore power as a dynamic process, a series of dominating and resisting moves rather than an entity belonging to an institution, a discourse or a speaker. The form of analysis I undertook in this chapter, was not as in-depth in as a Conversation Analyst would treat such data, but it was pitched at the general level of exploring the speaker's moves in relation to the discursive positions they were arguing for. This was enough to point out the silencing and resisting mechanisms of power in this discursive event.

4. *The materiality of discourse and the possible extension and application of the research*

On quite another level, I want to consider once more the problem of the material effects of discourse. These are by no means straightforward effects. As Chouliaraki and Fairclough point out 'it is important to recognise the social importance of discourse without reducing social life to discourse –a reductionism characteristic of postmodern views of the social world that is a constant threat to discourse analysts'.²⁷⁶ In this form of discourse material I was analysing, social practices and subjectivities are partially pre-scribed and restricted through discourse. The Parliament is obviously a state institution of power, with real material consequences following from its debates. Following repeated discursive formations of women's roles in this context, women continue to be treated as primarily mothers (this influences views on women's professions, emotional characteristics, material needs, likes and dislikes). The lives of women are impacted in this way as well as their identities. On the other hand, material practices of resistance and subordination are not the same as discourses which prescribe or limit them. For instance, women do continue to have abortions, despite the hegemonic discourse on women's reproductive rights coming from the state institutions and the church, and codified in the law. However, they have to do that in secret, often in bad conditions with no guarantee of proper medical care and with the fear of the possible repercussions if found out. The resulting practices are therefore partly the effects of the political

discourses of the Polish elite and the Church, while they can in no way be reduced to them.

A final question that can be posed in relation to this type of research relates to its 'usefulness' outside of academic context, especially in feminist politics/activism. After all, all critical social science, as well as feminist scholarship is aimed at impacting the social life at least in terms of providing less exclusionary models of public sphere, or, indeed, of public discourse. I agree with Chouliaraki and Fairclough that critical linguistics can at least, and maybe only, provide others with a more reflexive, critical thinking about social life without which it is impossible to have agency in contemporary, discourse-dominated society.²⁷⁷

Perhaps the most interesting parallel to the type of critical linguistic research that I have been pursuing in this thesis can be found in the work of Carol Lee Bacchi, who postulates the notion of category politics applied to the political process of lobbying for gender equality legislation.²⁷⁸ In her work, a critical and a political awareness of the implications of 'naming' is postulated, for example the political implications and uses of categories such as 'positive discrimination', 'affirmative action' and 'gender equality' are explored. The orientation of this type of research is 'drawing attention to the political uses of categories and working to produce understandings of

²⁷⁶ Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 6.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 9-10.

²⁷⁸ Carol Lee Bacchi, *The Politics of Affirmative Action: 'Women', 'Equality' and Category Politics* (London: Sage, 1997)

categories which have effects we deem desirable'.²⁷⁹ This is an approach parallel to the Critical Discourse Analysis but aimed at impacting actual policies. In this respect, an interesting question is the potential application of Critical Discourse Analysis and feminist methodology to a study of political institutions, particularly in terms of the so-called 'discursive institutional practice'. Some forms of discourse analysis are very popular among political scientists and social scientists in general, but concepts such as repertoires and frames have not been widely used. There is undoubtedly potential for multidisciplinary research or cross-fertilisation of the different disciplines of social science in the area of discourse analysis.

As far as a possible relationship between feminist research and feminist action is concerned, policy advocacy or simply feminist activism have different contexts and different, if overlapping concerns than feminist scholarship. Again, I agree with Chouliaraki and Fairclough that there should always be a dialogue between the two but this should be done without simplifying discourse analysis.²⁸⁰ In this respect, my work situates itself as a theoretical practice, not activism, at least as far as this thesis is concerned. The main goal of such feminist research, and indeed of critical language analysis, is to provide one with tools for a more in-depth critical assessment of social and political reality.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 12.

²⁸⁰ Chouliaraki and Fairclough., 9, 10.

5. *A postscript to the context of the analysed debates*

When this work was created (during its last stages) the political balance of power shifted. The elections of 2001 have resulted in a changed from the previously right wing to left-wing government. Some of the issues central to the resisting discourse as analysed in this work (such as equality legislation) have been taken up during the electoral campaign and some positive change in the discourse of the prospective politicians can be noted. Indeed, as the political power shifted, the power of particular discursive representations started to change too. The position described here as resisting gained some power over the representation of women, with effects for the wider public debate. Indeed, one could argue that it could become more of a hegemonic construction, once the emancipatory and inclusive positions it allowed gain more acceptance. On the other hand, some of the new political forces in the parliament represent even more conservative or more populist discourses on femininity than the ones presented in this thesis. And thus, the battle over the constructions of femininity represented in this thesis is still being fought with the same intensity.

References

- Austin, J.L. (1973) *How to Do Things With Words?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baer, Monika. (1999) 'Kategoria "kobiety" we współczesnych dyskursach publicznych. Przyczynek do dyskusji.' (The Category "Woman" in Contemporary Public Discourses. A Point for Discussion), in Elzbieta Pakszys and Włodzimierz Heller (eds) *Publiczna Przestrzeń Kobiet. Obrazy Dawne I Nowe*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe im. Adama Mickiewicza, pp. 231-258.
- Barat, Erzebet. (1999) 'A Relational Model of Identity', PhD Thesis, Lancaster: Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language
- Bator, Joanna. (1999) *Wizerunek kobiety w polskiej debacie publicznej: perspektywa feministyczna* (The image of a woman in the Polish public debate: a feminist perspective), Warsaw: Instytut Spraw Publicznych.
- Bergevall, L. Victoria. (1996) 'Constructing and Enacting Gender Through Discourse: Negotiating Multiple Roles as Female Engineering Students', in Victoria L. Bergvall, Janet M. Bing and Alice F. Freed (eds) *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, London: Longman, pp.173-201.
- Billig, Michael. (1999) 'Whose terms? Whose ordinariness? Rhetoric and ideology in conversational analysis', *Discourse and Society* 10 (40): 543 - 557.
- Bucholtz, Mary and Hall, Kira. (1995) 'Introduction: Twenty Year's after *Language and Woman's Place*', in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, New York and London: Routledge, pp.1-24.

- Butler, Judith and Scott, Joan. (eds) (1992) *Feminists Theorise the Political*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. (1997) *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Cameron, Deborah. (1989) and Coates, Jennifer. 'Some Problems in the Sociolinguistic Explanation of Sex Differences' in Jennifer Coates and Deborah Cameron (eds) *Women in Their Speech Communities*, London: Longman, pp.13- 26.
- Cameron, Deborah. (1989) 'Introduction' in Jennifer Coates and Deborah Cameron (eds) *Women in Their Speech Communities*, London: Longman, pp.3-12.
- Cameron, Deborah. (ed.) (1990) *Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Cameron, Deborah. (1995) *Verbal Hygiene*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Cameron, Deborah. (1996) 'The language-gender interface: challenging co-optation,' in Victoria L. Bergvall, Janet M. Bing and Alice F. Freed (eds) *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, London: Longman, pp.31-53.
- Cameron, Deborah. (1995a) 'Rethinking Language and Gender Studies: Issues for the 1990's.' in Sara Mills (ed.) *Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London: Longman, pp. 14-30.
- Chouliaraki, Lilie and Fairclough, Norman. (1999) *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Coates, Jennifer. (1989) 'Gossip Revisited: Language in All Female Groups' in Jennifer Coates and Deborah Cameron (eds) *Women in Their Speech Communities*, London: Longman, pp. 94- 122.
- Coates, Jennifer. (1995) 'Language, Gender and Career' in Sara Mills (ed.) *Language and Gender: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London: Longman, pp.13-26.

- Coupland, Nikolas and Jaworski, Adam. (2001) 'Discourse' in Paul Cobley (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics and Linguistics*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 134-148.
- Crawford, Mary. (1995) *On Gender and Language*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage.
- Gibbon, Margaret. (1999) *Feminist Perspectives on Language*, London and New York: Longman.
- De Lauretis, Teresa. (1987) *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ehrlich, Susan. (1995) 'Critical Linguistics as Feminist Methodology' in Sandra Burt and Lorraine Code (eds) *Changing Methods: Feminists Transforming Practice*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, pp.46-73.
- Fairclough, Norman. (2003) 'Critical Discourse Analysis in Researching Language in the New Capitalism: Overdetermination, Transdisciplinarity and Textual Analysis', forthcoming in L. Young (ed) *Systemic Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis*, Continuum 2003
- Fairclough, Norman. (2001) 'The Dialectics of Discourse' *Textus* XIV.2 2001, pp. 231-242
- Fairclough, Norman. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis, the Critical Study of Language*, London: Longman.
- Fairclough, Norman. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, Norman. (1989) *Language and Power*, London and New York: Longman.
- Fishman, Pamela. (1983) 'Interaction: the work women do' in Barrie Thorne, Cheris Kramarae and Nancy Henley (eds) *Language, Gender and Society*, Rowley, MA: Newbury House, pp. 89-101.
- Foucault, Michel. (1996) 'The Discourse on Language', in Richard Kerney and Mara

- Rainwater (eds) *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 339- 360.
- Foucault, Michel. (1972) *Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Travistock.
- Fraser, Nancy. (1989) *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Fraser, Nancy. (1998) 'Sex, Lies and The Public Sphere: Reflections on the Confirmation of Clarence Thomas' in Joan B. Landes (ed.) *Feminism, the Public and Private*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.314- 337.
- Fuszara, Malgorzata. (1993) 'Abortion and the Formation of the Public Sphere in Poland', in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds) *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, New York and London: Routledge, pp.241-252.
- Gal, Susan. (1995) 'Language, Gender, and Power, An Anthropological Review' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, New York and London: Routledge, pp.169-182.
- Gal, Susan and Kligman, Gail. (2000) *The Politics of Gender after Socialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Goodwin, Charles and Durranti, Alessandro (eds) (1992) *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Halliday, Michael. (1997) 'Language in a Social Perspective', in Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (eds) *Sociolinguistics: A Reader and a Coursework*, London: MacMillan, pp.31-39.
- Haraway, Donna. (1998) 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, London: Free Association Books, pp.249-263.

- Harding, Sandra. (1993) 'Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity"?' in L. Alkoff and E. Potter (eds) *Feminist Epistemologies*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 49-82.
- Harstock, Nancy. (1990) 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?' in L.J. Nicholson (ed.) *From Feminism to Postmodernism*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 157-175.
- Herring, Susan., Johnson, A. Deborah. and DiBenedetto, Tamara. (1995) 'This Discussion is Going too Far: Male Resistance to Female Participation on the Internet' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 67-96.
- Hodge, Robert and Kress, Gunther. (1995) *Social Semiotics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Hennessy, Rosemary. (1993) *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Johnson, Sally. (1995) *Gender, Group Identity and Variation in the Berlin Verbal: A Sociolinguistic Study*, Bern: Peter Lang.
- Johnson, Sally. (1997), 'Theorising Language and Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective', in Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof (eds) *Language and Masculinity*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 8-26.
- Kramarae, Cherie. (1982) 'Gender: how she speaks' in Ellen Bouchard Ryan and Howard Giles (eds) *Attitudes Towards Language Variation*, London: Edward Arnold, pp.84-99.
- Labov, William. (1966) *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, Washington DC: Centre for Applied Linguistics.
- Lakoff, Robin. (1974) 'Why Women are Ladies' in Charles Fillmore, George Lakoff and

- Robin Lakoff (eds) *Berkeley Studies of Syntax and Semantic*, Vol. 1, Berkeley: University of California Press
- Lakoff, Robin. (1975) 'Extract from *Language and Woman's Place*', in Deborah Cameron (ed.) *Feminist Critique of Language*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 221-223.
- Lakoff, Robin. (1995), 'Cries and Whispers: the Shattering of the Silence' in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 25-50.
- Lee Bacchi, Carol. (1997) *The Politics of Affirmative Action: 'Women', 'Equality' and Category Politics*, London: Sage,
- Lee, David. (1992) *Competing Discourses: Perspective and Ideology in Language*, London and New York: Longman.
- Leto De Francisco, Victoria. 'The Sounds of Silence: How Men Silence Women in Marital Relations' *Discourse and Society* 2 (4): 413-224.
- Litosseliti, Lia. (2002) 'Head to Head': Gendered Repertoires in Newspaper Arguments' in Litosseliti, Lia and Jane Sunderland (eds) *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Litosseliti, Lia. (1999) *Moral Repertoires and Gender Voices in Argumentation*, PhD thesis, Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language, Lancaster University.
- Norma Mendoza-Denton (1995) 'Pregnant Pauses: Silence and Authority in the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas Hearings', in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, New York and London: Routledge, pp.54-59.
- Mills, Sara. (1995) *Feminist Stylistics*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Mills, Sara. (1997) *Discourse*, London and New York: Routledge.

- Montgomery, Martin. (1995) *An Introduction to Language and Society*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Nowakowska, Urszula. (1997) 'The new Right and Fundamentalism' in Tanya Renne (ed.) *Anna's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe*, Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, pp.26-33.
- Nowicka, Wanda. (1997) 'Ban on Abortion in Poland. Why?' in Tanya Renne (ed.) *Anna's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe*, Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 42-46.
- Ochs, Elinor and Taylor, Carolyn. (1995) 'The "Father Knows Best" Dynamic in Dinnertime Narratives' in Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (eds) *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, New York and London: Routledge, 97-120.
- Platek, Monika. (1995) 'Dziewice, kury domowe i dziwki. O sytuacji kobiet w Polsce', (Virgins, Housewives and Whores. About the Situation of Women in Poland), in Jolanta Szymczak (ed.) *Kobiety o Kobietach*, Warszawa: Women and Economics Global Working Group, pp. 9-24.
- Philips, Susan U. (1998) 'Language Ideologies in Institutions of Power. A Commentary' in Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathyryn A Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity (eds) *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, New York and London: Oxford University Press, pp.211 -225.
- Reading, Anna. (1992) *Polish Women, Solidarity and Feminism*, London: MacMillan.
- Reener, Tanya and Ule, Mirjana. (1998) 'Back to the Future: Nationalism and Gender in Post-Socialist States' in Rick Wilford and Robert Miller (eds) *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: the Politics of Transition*, New York and London: Routledge, pp.120-132.
- Sheman, Naomi. (1993) *Engenderings: Constructions of knowledge, Authority and Privilege*, London: Routledge, pp. 185-192.

- Smith, Dorothy. (1990) *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling*, London: Routledge.
- Talbot, Mary M. (1998) *Language and Gender: an Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Tannen, Deborah. (1991) *You Just Don't Understand*, London: Virago.
- Troemel-Ploetz, Senta. 'Review Essay: Selling the Apolitical' *Discourse and Society* 2(4): 489- 492.
- Trudgill, Peter. (1998) 'Sex, covert prestige and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich' in Jennifer Coates (ed.) *Language and Gender: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp.21-28.
- True, Jocqui. (2000) 'Gendering Post-Socialist Transitions' in Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan (eds) *Gender And Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites, and Resistances*, London: Routledge, pp.74-93.
- Weedon, Chris. (1997) *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wodak, Ruth. (1996) *Disorders of Discourse*, London and New York: Longman.
- Zimmerman, Don and West, Candance. (1975) 'Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation' in Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (eds) *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance*, Rowley, MA: Newbury House, pp. 105- 129.

Internet Sources

Sprawozdania stenograficzne z posiedzen sejm. (transcripts form the parliamentary sessions), www.sejm.gov.pl

Montgomery, Katarzyna 'Kropiwnicki at the UN Session. The first woman of the III Republic of Poland. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, (June 2000), www.gazeta.pl

OSKA, 'The protests of women's circles regarding the position of the Polish government at the New York conference. (June 2000), www.oska.org.pl

Appendix

Full transcript of the parliamentary debate analysed in Chapter 5.

Debate on the Polish delegation at the UN Session on Women. (June 29, 2001: 16th point of the daily agenda)

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Pani poseł Iwona Śledzińska-Katarasińska zwróciła się do prezesa Rady Ministrów z pytaniem dotyczącym udziału polskiej delegacji pod przewodnictwem Jerzego Kropiwnickiego w sesji ONZ w Nowym Jorku poświęconej sytuacji kobiet na świecie. Proszę bardzo, pani minister, o sprecyzowanie czy rozszerzenie pytania.

Posel Iwona Śledzińska-Katarasińska: Czyli rozumiem, panie marszałku, pani poseł?

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Pani poseł. **Posel Iwona Śledzińska-Katarasińska:** Dziękuję bardzo.

Polska opinia publiczna jest zbulwersowana doniesieniami o udziale polskiej delegacji rządowej w tej specjalnej sesji Zgromadzenia Ogólnego ONZ, delegacji rządowej pod przewodnictwem ministra Jerzego Kropiwnickiego. Sesja poświęcona była ocenie wdrażania w życie, na świecie właśnie, dokumentu zwanego platformą działania, uchwalonego w 1995 roku na światowej konferencji ONZ poświęconej problemom kobiet. Relacje i doniesienia są raczej prawdziwe, ponieważ zostały potwierdzone po powrocie delegacji przez samego ministra Kropiwnickiego, który podczas konferencji prasowej przyznał, że informacje, które przedostały się do opinii publicznej, są prawdziwe. A więc, po pierwsze, polska delegacja głosowała przeciwko podpisaniu deklaracji końcowej, dlatego że m.in. znalazło się tam sformułowanie zakazu dyskryminacji z powodu orientacji seksualnej. Po drugie, polska delegacja kwestionowała konieczność przestrzegania i wdrażania praw kobiet jako praw człowieka, a na spotkaniu z przedstawicielami Unii Europejskiej pytana o powody takiego stanowiska i niedotrzymywanie standardów europejskich, tłumaczyła, że jeszcze w Unii nie jest, a więc niekoniecznie musi tych wszystkich standardów dotrzymywać. I wreszcie sam minister Kropiwnicki w swoim wystąpieniu na sesji plenarnej, w mojej przynajmniej ocenie, niekoniecznie mówił na temat. Być może trudno było pokazać w tym pięcioleciu osiągnięcia w poprawie sytuacji kobiet, chociaż można było rozwinąć naprawdę znakomity zapis, który istnieje w polskiej konstytucji, i przynajmniej to wskazać jako rzeczywisty sukces i osiągnięcie. Niekoniecznie działania na rzecz rodziny i działania, które istnieją w naszym prawodawstwie i w naszym systemie prawnym, służące ochronie życia poczętego, są tymi działaniami, o które pytano na tej konferencji. To bardzo ważne, tak. Tylko że - dlatego o tym mówię - chyba niekoniecznie na tym forum. Także dość zaskakujące w tych wypowiedziach były stwierdzenia - tak jakby to były dokonania ostatniego czasu - o wyższości wykształcenia kobiet nad wykształceniem mężczyzn. To jest zjawisko polskie od dawna, dobrze, być może, że tak jest. Ale zupełnie nieprawdziwe były stwierdzenia, że zwiększa się udział kobiet w życiu publicznym w Polsce, ponieważ, niestety, on się właśnie zmniejsza. I takż szokująca jest próba zmarginalizowania, wręcz nazwania marginesem zjawiska przemocy w rodzinie, w momencie kiedy na szczęście, na szczęście, mamy już taki stopień wolności, że tego typu patologiczne bolesne zjawiska, które zawsze istniały, są znane opinii publicznej i władze starają się je zwalczać. Nie ma chyba powodu, aby to ukrywać i nazywać marginesem. Mnie nie interesują poglądy...

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Pani poseł, już trzykrotnie przekroczyła pani czas.

Posel Iwona Śledzińska-Katarasińska: Już ostatnie zdanie, panie marszałku.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Trzecią minutę pani zaczyna.

Posel Iwona Śledzińska-Katarasińska: Sprawa jest poważna, panie marszałku, ponieważ...

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Rozumiem.

Posel Iwona Śledzińska-Katarasińska: ...nie dotyczy tylko prywatnych poglądów członków delegacji, bo w te nie wnikam, tylko prezentacji stanowiska rządu państwa, które w konstytucji ma zapisane, że

nikt nie może być dyskryminowany z jakiegokolwiek powodu, które aspiruje do szybkiego członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej. O to mi chodzi i stąd moje pytanie: Jak rząd polski ma zamiar zneutralizować fatalne efekty tego wystąpienia na forum międzynarodowym?

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję bardzo.

Przepraszam bardzo za tę uwagę, temat jest ważny, ale regulamin też jest poważną sprawą, a on mnie ogranicza. Chcę być sprawiedliwy i jednakowo egzekwować te zapisy regulaminu, które nas obowiązują. Do odpowiedzi została upoważniona przez prezesa Rady Ministrów pani Maria Smereczyńska - sekretarz stanu, pełnomocnik rządu ds. rodziny. Proszę bardzo panią minister.

Sekretarz Stanu w Kancelarii Prezesa Rady Ministrów Pełnomocnik Rządu do Spraw Rodziny Maria Smereczyńska: Dziękuję bardzo.

Panie Marszałku! Wysoka Izbo! Chciałam na wstępie powiedzieć, że rząd polski dokładnie i z dużą uwagą przygotowywał się do tej konferencji, m.in. dlatego szefem delegacji został minister - członek Rady Ministrów, któremu podlega rządowa rada ludnościowa, również zajmująca się tymi problemami. Na konferencji o takiej randze w Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych pojawiają się praktycznie co najmniej ministrowie tworzący skład Rady Ministrów poszczególnych krajów. Zresztą muszę przypomnieć, że w 1995 r. szefem delegacji na konferencję pekińską, na której dyskutowano i przyjmowano dokument końcowy: Platformę działania, był ówczesny minister, wicepremier Łuczak, który był w tym momencie szefem Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej albo KBN - tego dokładnie nie pamiętam. W każdym razie ranga delegacji była wysoka i stąd taki skład delegacji. Natomiast sama konferencja dotyczyła oceny sytuacji po 5 latach wdrażania dokumentu i o tym, że taki ma być kształt tej konferencji, mówiły wszystkie dokumenty przyjmowane wcześniej przez Organizację Narodów Zjednoczonych, łącznie z ostatnimi dokumentami przyjmowanymi przez komisję ECOSOC w ONZ jeszcze w marcu tego roku: żadnego negocjowania dokumentu wynegocjowanego, z trudem przyjętego w konsensusie w 1995 r., w konsensusie, który nikogo praktycznie nie zadowalał, żadnego otwierania negocjacji na temat dokumentu. Natomiast jest to przegląd sytuacji we wszystkich krajach, które ten dokument wtedy akceptowały. Tych kilkanaście rozdziałów, kilkanaście różnych zagadnień, kilkanaście różnych pól, które są poświęcone w tym dokumencie relacji kobiet w tych obszarach działania, miało być poddane przeglądowi; jak to wygląda w różnych krajach, w różnych obszarach świata, jakie zostały poczynione postępy w tym zakresie. W związku z tym nie było żadnych decyzji rządowych, żadnych stanowisk rządowych, żadnych dokumentów, zresztą dokumenty ONZ, które wcześniej przychodziły, mówiły o tym, że nie stanowisko rządu jest potrzebne, tylko przegląd sytuacji 5 lat po Pekinie, i z takimi decyzjami rady delegacji różnych rządów przyjechały na tę konferencję. Takie było też, w świetle tych wszystkich dokumentów ONZ, stanowisko przygotowane u nas przez pracowników urzędów; popieramy to, co ONZ powiedział i nie będzie renegeacji dokumentu, natomiast przegląd sytuacji 5 lat po konferencji w Pekinie. Takie było konsekwentnie stanowisko w czasie pracy komitetów przygotowawczych na tejże konferencji. Natomiast pojawiły się głosy, że należy, bo czas płynie, wszystko unowocześnić i w związku z tym te z trudem wynegocjowane zapisy dokumentu sprzed 5 lat należy poszerzyć o zapisy nowocześniejsze, jak o nich mówiono, które mają uwzględnić więcej kwestii dotyczących tego tematu. Tymczasem były to rzeczywiście frazy i stwierdzenia, które nigdy nie były definiowane w żadnych dokumentach Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych, które tam się miały znaleźć po raz pierwszy bez, praktycznie, odniesienia. Były to trzy stwierdzenia dotyczące praw seksualnych, dotyczące różnorodności kobiet i dotyczące orientacji seksualnych. Do tej pory w dokumentach ONZ te trzy sformułowania nie miały żadnych definicji, w związku z tym była to jakby techniczna próba wstawienia nowych pojęć do wynegocjowanego dokumentu i na to kraje w trakcie dyskusji nie wyrażały zgody. Te pojęcia, te trzy sformułowania znalazły się we wcześniej przygotowanym przez parlamentarzystów Unii Europejskiej dokumencie, który do nas trafił w ostatniej chwili z zapytaniem: popieracie czy nie popieracie. Był to dokument, który był przygotowany przez kogo innego, do którego nie mieliśmy wglądu, tylko w ostatecznej jego formule przygotowanej do podpisu, a to nie jest sposób, bo jak się nie ma możliwości wzięcia udziału w tworzeniu dokumentu, to trudno od ręki się zgadzać na podpisanie tego, co jest podkładane. Po drugie, Polska w tej chwili jest w trakcie negocjacji dokumentów dotyczących sfery społecznej. Nikt z nas nie miał żadnego upoważnienia ani uprawnienia z zespołu negocjacyjnego do aprobowania dokumentów, które jeszcze są negocjowane. Było to stawianie nas w takiej sytuacji, że w tej chwili wszystko już popieramy, to jest zespół negocjacyjny, który nad tym dyskutuje i konkretne

dokumenty przyjmuje. Poza tym jest druga sprawa, dokument, który był przedkładany jako ten, którego rzekomo Polska nie chciała podpisać, który złamała, nie jest dokumentem, który wymusza przyjęcie tych pojęć, to zresztą było potem wyjaśnione i są w tej chwili już podpisane listy przez kilkudziesięciu parlamentarzystów Unii Europejskiej, że grupa, która przygotowywała ten dokument, nie miała mandatu na formułowanie takiego stanowiska i na procedowanie tego stanowiska w taki sposób na forum Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych, dlatego że są kraje, które mają zapisane w swoich konstytucjach daleko większe obostrzenia nawet niż Polska, jeżeli chodzi na przykład o ochronę życia, o ochronę wolności człowieka i one w tym zespole krajów Unii Europejskiej występują, w związku z tym nie są to dokumenty, które naruszają w jakikolwiek sposób czy gwałcą w jakikolwiek sposób dokumenty narodowe tychże krajów. Tak że to nie jest sytuacja, która zmuszała do tego czy spowodowała to, że jakiegokolwiek dokumenty ze strony Unii Europejskiej zostały złamane. Teraz kwestia deklaracji końcowej i zastrzeżenia. To zastrzeżenie było warunkowe. W dokumencie końcowym tejże konferencji nie znalazły się zapisy, do których zastrzeżenia się odnosiły, w związku z tym warunkowość tego dokumentu jest spełniona w tym sensie, że wszystko zostało powiedziane w taki sposób, że te zastrzegane trzy elementy straciły w pewnym sensie rację bytu. Kwestia dotycząca marginalizacji zjawiska przemocy - jeżeli się czyta całe zdanie i kontekst tego sformułowania bez tych dwóch wcześniejszych zdań i końcówki tego zdania, to rzeczywiście podawany w ten sposób traci on sens, natomiast całe zdanie ma odzwierciedlać to, że ten problem nie jest problemem powszechnym w Polsce, natomiast jest tak ważnym problemem, mającym ogromne implikacje w zakresie moralności, wpływu na życie społeczne, że w tej chwili został w Polsce złożony w ręce przede wszystkim powiatowych centrów pomocy rodzinie i jest to problem rozwiązywany, natomiast nikt nie miał ani zamiaru, ani nie wynika to z tych zdań, które w wystąpieniu się znalazły, że problem jest marginalizowany. To, że on jest w ilości tak określonej, nie znaczy, że jest marginalizowany, tylko znaczy, że nie jest problemem powszechnym. Myślę, że w tym zakresie, przynajmniej na te częściowe pytania, które wstępnie zostały postawione, tak chyba odpowiedź by wyglądała. Dziękuję bardzo.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję bardzo pani minister.

Są zgłoszenia do pytań dodatkowych. Pani poseł Katarasińska ma pierwszeństwo, może zadać takie pytanie, następnie zapisani są państwo posłowie: Marek Kaczyński, Izabella Sierakowska, Jan Kulas, Czesław Rysza, Bronisława Kowalska, Anna Sobecka, Wojciech Nowaczyk, Danuta Ciborowska, Jacek Szczot, Jacek Kasprzyk.

Czy ktoś jeszcze? Pan poseł Korpak, pani poseł Jasztal.

Kto jeszcze? To tyle, zamykamy listę pytających.

Proszę bardzo, po pół minutki. Pani poseł Katarasińska.

Posel Iwona Śledzińska-Katarasińska: Pani minister, ja to zdanie mam tutaj w tekście w całości i wiem, jak ono brzmi. To raz. Dwa. Mam takie pytanie, nie wiem, czy pani jest w stanie na nie odpowiedzieć, ale być może ma się pani z kim skonsultować. Otóż potwierdzenie wiedzy uzyskanej wcześniej znajdowałam w wywiadach z panem ministrem Kropiwnickim na tle relacji z konferencji prasowej. Ubolewam, że w żadnej z tych relacji nie znalazły się te wyjaśnienia, które pani tutaj nam przedstawiła tak rzeczowo i rzetelnie. Jednak stawiany zarzut, że przewodniczący delegacji może nie do końca był osobą najlepiej zorientowaną co do tematu, w którym przyszło mu się poruszać, ma uzasadnienie choćby i w tym, że podczas jednego z tych spotkań czy też w czasie konferencji wyraźnie nawet semantyczne błędy zdarzały się panu ministrowi, kiedy pederastę mylił z pedofilią.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję.

Pan poseł Marek Kaczyński.

Posel Marek Kaczyński: Dziękuję, panie marszałku.

Chcę przede wszystkim serdecznie podziękować polskiej delegacji za stanowisko, jakie zaprezentowała na sesji specjalnej ONZ. (Okłaski) Pragnę też zadać pytanie: Czy wystąpienie polskiej delegacji, które polegało na uznaniu równości, godności i praw kobiety i mężczyzny we wszystkich sferach życia, uznaniu rodziny za naturalne środowisko istoty ludzkiej, uznanie prawa do życia obejmującego okres od poczęcia do naturalnej śmierci, prawa do wykształcenia, sprzeciwienie

się legalizacji tzw. małżeństw homoseksualnych czy sprzeciwienie się aborcji - czy takie stanowisko może bulwersować polskie społeczeństwo? To, co usłyszałem na tej sali, a mianowicie że taka jest reakcja na to polskiego społeczeństwa, po prostu mnie zbulwersowało. Jest wprost przeciwnie, społeczeństwo polskie w zdecydowanej większości popiera takie stanowisko. Jeszcze raz dziękuję panu ministrowi i całej delegacji za takie stanowisko. Dziękuję bardzo.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Pani poseł Izabella Sierakowska.

Posel Izabella Sierakowska: Panie Marszałku! Wysoki Sejmie! Panie Ministrze Kropiwnicki! Jest pan niezłym ekonomistą, pana poglądy są pańskimi poglądami. Bardzo szanuję pana poglądy, akceptuję pana poglądy, poglądy pana partii, ale nie akceptuję zupełnie tego, co się stało. A mianowicie doskonale pan wie, że ugrupowanie, w którym znalazł się polski rząd, reprezentowany przez ministra Akcji Wyborczej Solidarność, znalazł się - jak to powiedzieli dziennikarze w Nowym Jorku - w nieświętej koalicji. A któż tam był w tej nieświętej koalicji - ja tylko przypomnę. A więc Watykan, gdzie kobiet nie ma, Libia, która jest znana ze wspierania terroryzmu, Iran, rządzony przez ajatollahów, miotająca się między wojującym islamem i dyktaturą wojskową Algieria, fanatycznie islamski Sudan i Pakistan oraz obecnie ultrakatolicka Nikaragua. Dochodziła tam w porowach jeszcze Kuba, panie ministrze. No, nie wiem, jak się pan czuł w tym towarzystwie? Pani Minister! Ja nie oczekuję od pani odpowiedzi. Moje pytanie, dlatego że nasze pytania, moje i pani poseł Waniek, podobnie były sformułowane...

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Ale do kogo pani kieruje to pytanie? Posel Izabella Sierakowska
Do pana premiera Buzka! I od pana premiera Buzka oczekuję odpowiedzi na pytanie: Jakimi kryteriami kierował się pan, stawiając na czele polskiej delegacji rządowej ekonomistę, zajmującego się na co dzień sprawami gospodarczymi i niemającego teoretycznego ani praktycznego przygotowania do wypowiadania się w poruszanych na Światowej Konferencji Kobiet zagadnieniach? Czy sformułowany w art. 32 Konstytucji Rzeczypospolitej zakaz dyskryminacji z jakiegokolwiek przyczyny obejmuje zakaz dyskryminacji ze względu na orientację seksualną? Jeśli tak, to czym rząd polski uzasadni sprzeciw polskiej delegacji rządowej w przedmiocie wpisania zakazu dyskryminacji ze względu na orientację seksualną do deklaracji końcowej Światowej Konferencji Kobiet? Jeszcze jedno pytanie. Czy wypowiedzi ministra Kropiwnickiego reprezentują stanowisko rządu Rzeczypospolitej, a jeśli tak, to czy rząd uznaje, że skoro Polska nie jest jeszcze członkiem Unii Europejskiej, a jedynie aspiruje do członkostwa, nie musi w tym zakresie dostosować swojego stanowiska do stanowiska Unii Europejskiej? Ostatnie pytanie. Czy proces dostosowania naszego prawa do prawa obowiązującego w Unii Europejskiej nie obejmuje ochrony praw kobiet oraz praw mniejszości? Do pana premiera Buzka.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję. Czyli pani nie oczekuje odpowiedzi.

Posel Izabella Sierakowska: Nie oczekuję odpowiedzi, tak. Dziękuję.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Pan poseł Jan Kulas.

Posel Jan Kulas: Rozumiem, panie marszałku, panie ministrze, że uznane tradycyjne wartości prorodzinne budzą sprzeciw takich posłanek między innymi jak przed chwilą...

(Posel Izabella Sierakowska: Ja uwielbiam rodzinę; co to ma do rzeczy?)

Pierwsze moje pytanie dotyczy tego, jakie pozytywne wartości, jakie dobre zmiany w awansie cywilizacyjnym polskich kobiet zaprezentowano na tej konferencji (choćby kwestia wykształcenia i edukacji, co niewątpliwie jest istotne). Drugie pytanie. Czy na tej konferencji zastanawiano się, proponowano jakieś metody, środki, sposoby w celu zwiększenia udziału kobiet w życiu publicznym, a więc w parlamencie i w samorządach lokalnych? Odnoszę wrażenie, że najgorzej w tym względzie było chyba jednak za rządów SLD. Dziękuję.

(Posel Edward Wende: Już ma pani odpowiedź.)

(Posel Izabella Sierakowska: A ja wcale nie chciałam odpowiedzi)

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję. Pan poseł Czesław Ryszka.

Posel Czesław Ryszka: Dziękuję, panie marszałku.

Padło sformułowanie, że społeczeństwo polskie, że organizacje kobiece wyraziły dezaprobatę wobec polskiej delegacji, której przewodniczył pan minister Jerzy Kropiwnicki. O ile wiem, Federacja Kobiet Katolickich, bardzo liczna organizacja, może najliczniejsza, wyraziła uznanie dla pana ministra Kropiwnickiego. Chyba że to są jakieś inne kobiety...

(Głos z sali: Nie polskie.)

No, może nie polskie, bo polskie to tylko do SLD należą.

Mam takie pytanie. Panie ministrze, czy to prawda, że posiedzenie, o którym mowa, było prowadzone w sposób wysoce niedemokratyczny czy wręcz napastliwy - pani przewodnicząca atakowała pańską osobę - i że pańskiej obronie wystąpili delegacji innych krajów? Więcej, że sprawa się nie zakończyła i obecnie w

Parlamencie Europejskim trwa dyskusja na temat złego prowadzenia obrad w Nowym Jorku, tzn. Poszerzenia zakresu tematycznego konferencji i pozwolenia sobie na upominanie delegacji suwerennego państwa.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję. Pani poseł Bronisława Kowalska.

Posel Bronisława Kowalska: Dziękuję uprzejmie, panie marszałku.

Panie pośle, myślę, że na szczęście nie wszystko w Polsce musi być katolickie i to jest całe zwycięstwo naszej demokracji. Mam trzy pytania. Panie ministrze, w Polsce nie brakuje mądrych kobiet, o czym chociażby świadczy ta sala, a więc: czy nie uważa pan, że o kobietach powinny najczęściej wypowiadać się kobiety? Drugie pytanie. Panie ministrze, ile osób wchodziło w skład polskiej delegacji i kto reprezentował polską opozycję? I, panie ministrze, czy nie uważa pan, że powinien pan zwrócić do budżetu państwa koszty pobytu pana i całej delegacji, ponieważ delegacja nie reprezentowała poglądów całego społeczeństwa, a tylko Zjednoczenia Chrześcijańsko-Narodowego? Dziękuję bardzo.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję. Pani poseł Anna Sobecka.

Posel Anna Sobecka: Dziękuję, panie marszałku.

Wysoki Sejmie! W nieprzyjaznych działaniach i naciskach z powodu wyrażonego stanowiska na forum sesji ONZ naszej delegacji powoływano się na traktat amsterdamski. Moje pytanie brzmi: Jaka jest treść art. 13 traktatu amsterdamskiego? Dziękuję.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję. Pan poseł Wojciech Nowaczyk.

Posel Wojciech Nowaczyk: Dziękuję bardzo, panie marszałku.

Pan minister Kropiwnicki, człowiek jak dotąd znany z odwagi prezentowania swego zdania w tym omawianym przypadku zajął stanowisko dość szokujące. Cytuję to, tak to było określane. I pytanie: czy tym stanowiskiem chciał się przypodobać prawicowej orientacji rządowej? Pytanie kolejne: czy za tę uległość został nagrodzony przez premiera stanowiskiem ministra? Czy pan minister Kropiwnicki jako mężczyzna nie obawia się za to zemsty kobiet w sposób typowo kobiecy? Dziękuję bardzo.

(Poseł Edward Wende: To jest pytanie epokowe.)

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Pani poseł Danuta Ciborowska.

Posel Danuta Ciborowska: Dziękuję bardzo.

Panie Marszałku! Panie ministrze, proszę odpowiedzieć mi na następujące pytanie. Otóż po powrocie delegacji polskiej media informowały o różnych sprawach, w tym nie było pełnej jasności co do tego, czyje stanowisko, tak prawdę mówiąc, reprezentuje delegacja polska. Jeżeli delegacja polska - to powinna reprezentować stanowisko rządu.

I w związku z tym moje pytanie brzmi: Panie ministrze, kiedy, na którym posiedzeniu, Rada Ministrów dyskutowała i wypracowała to stanowisko i w związku z tym czy takie właśnie stanowisko Rada Ministrów poleciła polskiej delegacji prezentować na tej konferencji? Dziękuję.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję. Pan poseł Jacek Szczot.

Posel Jacek Szczot: Dziękuję bardzo.

Panie ministrze, niedawno służba prasowa ONZ na stronie internetowej zamieściła relacje z wystąpienia pana ministra i tam znalazło się stwierdzenie, że jakoby Polska popierała życie człowieka od jego urodzenia do śmierci. Nie wiem, czy to było stwierdzenie pana ministra, czy też stanowisko oficjalne polskiego rządu. Wiadomo przecież, że zgodnie z polskim prawodawstwem granice życia w Polsce są zupełnie inne.

Drugie pytanie. Kto był szefem polskiej delegacji na konferencji w Pekinie, której podsumowaniem była w

końcu konferencja w Nowym Jorku?

I pytanie trzecie, krótkie. Jaka opinia publiczna? Czy aby na pewno polska opinia publiczna jest zbulwersowana wystąpieniem polskiej delegacji w Nowym Jorku? Czy nie jest to zwykła manipulacja sfrustrowanych grupek feministycznych? Dziękuję. (Oklaski)

(Posel Bronisława Kowalska: Radio Maryja zrobi wam dobrą kampanię.)

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Pan poseł Jacek Kasprzyk.

Posel Jacek Kasprzyk: Pani Minister! Panie Ministrze! Jeżeli stanowisko przez pana prezentowane było omawiane na jednym z gremiów rządowych, to chciałbym się dowiedzieć, czy ono było jednoznacznym stanowiskiem, czy też były inne zdania, chociażby w Radzie Ministrów, na temat poglądów przedstawionych w imieniu rządu przez pana.

Drugie moje pytanie związane jest też z pewną odpowiedzią kolegom z AWS. Gdyby większość społeczeństwa podzielała państwa poglądy, to byłoby was 460 na tej sali i krzywa poparcia by wam rosła. (Oklaski)

W związku z powyższym chciałem zapytać pana ministra, skoro nikt na tej sali nie może powiedzieć o pełnym poparciu, a więc są reprezentowane różne poglądy...

(Głos z sali: Jak na razie jeszcze my rządzymy.)

Słusznie pan powiedział: na razie. Wobec powyższego chciałbym zapytać... Panie marszałku, czy mogę?

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Proszę.

Posel Jacek Kasprzyk: Wobec powyższego chciałem zapytać pana ministra, dlaczego w składzie delegacji nie znalazł się przedstawiciel opozycji, może nawet umiarkowanej dla pana?

Kolejne moje pytanie skierowane jest do pani minister. Pani minister, była pani uprzejma powiedzieć, że problemem przemocy w rodzinie zajmują się centra. Mamy już za sobą ponad rok doświadczeń w tej działalności. Czy jest pani w stanie ocenić skuteczność działalności powiatowych centrów pomocy rodzinie w zakresie zwalczania tych patologicznych zjawisk? To wszystko, dziękuję bardzo.

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję. Pan poseł Józef Korpak.

Posel Józef Korpak: Dziękuję, panie marszałku.

Na wstępie chciałbym się nie zgodzić z twierdzeniem, które tutaj padło, że o kobietach powinny wypowiadać się tylko kobiety, a o mężczyznach - mężczyźni. Osobiście uważam, że tak nie powinno być, na pewno.

(Głos z sali: Dyskryminacja.)

Chciałbym zadać dwa pytania. Po pierwsze, czy te osoby, które obecnie krytykują pana ministra Kropiwnickiego, to jest głównie Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet, promują zrównanie praw związków homoseksualnych z prawami małżeństw, nie wykluczając nawet prawa do adopcji dzieci dla takich związków?

I drugie pytanie. Czy zdaniem pani minister nie jest obłudne stawianie zarzutów panu ministrowi Kropiwnickiemu o ukrywanie jakoby przemocy w rodzinach, w sytuacji gdy w mediach ta przemoc

jest na porządku dziennym i tutaj ugrupowania, które państwo reprezentują, szczególnie SLD, nie robią nic, żeby ten stan rzeczy zmienić, żeby tej przemocy w mediach nie było? Dziękuję. (Oklaski)

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Pan poseł Kasprzyk coś sobie pilnego przypomniał, tak? 10 sekund, proszę bardzo.

Poseł Jacek Kasprzyk: Przepraszam. 10 sekund.

Panie ministrze, co stało na przeszkodzie, aby stanowisko, które pan zamierzał reprezentować, było omawiane również w którejś z komisji sejmowych? W parlamencie o tym dokumencie nie dyskutowano. Co było taką przeszkodą?

Wicemarszałek Jan Król: Dziękuję.

Bardzo proszę panią minister Marię Smereczyńską o udzielenie odpowiedzi.

(Poseł Wojciech Nowaczyk: A pan minister Kropiwnicki?)

Pan minister Kropiwnicki nie ma upoważnień, ale jak będzie chciał zabrać głos...

(Poseł Wojciech Nowaczyk: Protestujemy.) Pan premier upoważnił panią minister Smereczyńską. Proszę bardzo.

Sekretarz Stanu w Kancelarii Prezesa Rady Ministrów Pełnomocnik Rządu do Spraw Rodziny Maria Smereczyńska: Dziękuję bardzo.

Panie Marszałku! Wysoka Izbo! Wróć jeszcze raz do tego, co już wcześniej powiedziałam, mianowicie do tego, że pan minister Kropiwnicki był szefem delegacji. Wspomniałam już o tym, że 5 lat temu szefem delegacji był ówczesny wicepremier, pan minister Aleksander Łuczak, który był wtedy albo szefem KBN, albo Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej - to się akurat w tym roku zmieniało - i który, jak chyba wszyscy wiedzą, też nie jest kobietą. Czyli 5 lat temu też tak to wyglądało i 5 lat temu również opozycja do tej delegacji nie była zapraszana. Jeśli chodzi natomiast o to spotkanie, które było w Nowym Jorku na początku czerwca, to delegacja rządowa pojechała tam przedstawić sytuację w 5 lat po Pekinie. W związku z tym - już wcześniej to powiedziałam - ze strony Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych nie było wymogu, są na to dokumenty i paragrafy, przedstawiania stanowisk rządowych. Nie było więc też wymogu przygotowywania stanowiska rządowego, które mogłoby być prezentowane gdziekolwiek w celach dyskusji, natomiast jeżeli parlament nie był zainteresowany i nie zadał takiego pytania, to też nie było powodu wychodzenia z tym do parlamentu - przecież o konferencji wiedzieli wszyscy.

Tak że wracając jeszcze raz do kwestii szefa delegacji na tę czerwcową konferencję, trzeba powiedzieć, że pan minister Kropiwnicki jest, owszem, ekonomistą i na pewno, tak jak pani poseł była uprzejma powiedzieć, dobrym ekonomistą, natomiast w latach 1991-1992 był szefem Ministerstwa Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, ostatnio zaś - Rządowego Centrum Studiów Strategicznych, gdzie istnieje departament polityki społecznej, a przede wszystkim odpowiada za rządową Radę Ludnościową, która tymi problemami również się zajmuje. Już wcześniej zresztą powiedziałam państwu, że tak wygląda ta sytuacja. Obie te instytucje przygotowywały wszystkie materiały na tę konferencję - i wcześniej, na użytek raportu dla Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych. Jeżeli chodzi o informacje, które otrzymała opinia publiczna za pomocą prasy, to nie moją jest rzeczą oceniać, co prasa robi z tym, co otrzymuje. Mogę tylko powiedzieć, że sama udzielałam długiego wywiadu przedstawicielce jednej z bardzo poczytnych gazet i do dzisiaj to się nie ukazało. Tak że myślę, iż zainteresowanie prasy tym tematem jest bardzo jednostronne i rzeczowe wyjaśnienia, rzeczowa informacja po prostu prasy nie interesuje. Natomiast wszyscy dziennikarze są zainteresowani tanią populistyką, która jest im podsuwana przez różne środowiska, może niezadowolone z takiego obrotu rzeczy, jaki miał miejsce w związku z podsumowaniem tej konferencji czerwcowej w Nowym Jorku, 5 lat po Pekinie - niezadowolone, gdyż ten dokument końcowy nie zawiera tych sformułowań, o które tak mocno i hałaśliwie zabiegały środowiska związane przede wszystkim z ruchami feministycznymi. Tak zresztą też wyglądała sprawa tego spotkania parlamentarzystów Unii Europejskiej, którzy zapytali o to, dlaczego się nie przyłączamy. Już wcześniej wyjaśniałam, że nie jest naszą sprawą negocjowanie dokumentów Unii Europejskiej, nie jesteśmy do tego upoważnieni, natomiast nie było żadnych przekroczeń w odniesieniu do tych dokumentów. Przytoczę fragment traktatu amsterdamskiego w polskim tłumaczeniu: "Nie naruszając innych postanowień niniejszego traktatu i

w granicach uprawnień przyznanych Wspólnocie na jego podstawie, Rada, działając jednomyślnie, na wniosek Komisji i po porozumieniu z Parlamentem Europejskim, może podjąć stosowne działania, by zwalczać dyskryminację z powodu płci, rasy lub pochodzenia etnicznego, religii lub wyznania, inwalidztwa, wieku lub orientacji seksualnej". Jest dużo warunków, które muszą być spełnione wcześniej, zanim w ogóle takie działania zostaną podjęte, i to jest sytuacja, która absolutnie nie uprawnia do automatycznego działania zgodnie z tym traktatem. Zresztą, też wspomniałam o tym wcześniej, po tych wszystkich wydarzeniach, po rozmowach, które prowadziły parlamentarzystki przede wszystkim ze środowisk komisji równościowej w parlamencie Unii Europejskiej, przyszły pisma adresowane do pana premiera - mamy je - z informacjami, że panie z tej komisji nie miały mandatu na formułowanie takiego stanowiska, gdyż Parlament Europejski nie wydał decyzji, nie upoważnił tego środowiska, tych grup do prezentowania takiego stanowiska. Zresztą ostatecznie próby wpisania tych dodatkowych, niezdefiniowanych sformułowań nie powiodły się - nie znalazło się to w tym dokumencie.

Tu chciałabym powiedzieć - też to było podniesione i na konferencji prasowej, i wcześniej - że nie było pomyłki co do pederastii i pedofilii, dlatego że w szerokim pojęciu - zresztą zostało to podkreślone bardzo wcześniej na spotkaniach komitetu przygotowawczego - to stwierdzenie nie wyklucza tak drastycznych zachowań, które towarzyszą innym zachowaniom seksualnym. W związku z tym to był jeden z argumentów, który również funkcjonował w czasie prac komisji, nie ma tu mowy o żadnej pomyłce i nie jest to pomyłka.

Muszę odpowiedzieć na jeszcze jedno pytanie, które zresztą pojawiało się wcześniej w prasie. Teraz była uprzejma je zadać pani poseł Sierakowska, która mówiła, że Polska znalazła się w gronie krajów wymienianych przez panią poseł. I tutaj nie zgadzają mi się dwie rzeczy, dlatego że z jednej strony jest tak ogromne wołanie o tolerancję dla wszystkiego, natomiast z drugiej strony jest tak drastyczna nietolerancja, granicząca praktycznie z rasizmem. Nikt nie ma prawa oskarżać innych narodów o cokolwiek (Oklaski), stawiając w takiej sytuacji, i dlatego tego stwierdzenia zupełnie nie rozumiem. Z jednej strony bowiem żądanie ogromnej tolerancji, a z drugiej strony tak nieprawdopodobna nietolerancja. Tak że tutaj odpowiedź na to praktycznie jak gdyby nasuwa się sama.

Kwestia orientacji seksualnych, która też przez panią poseł Sierakowską była podniesiona. To było to stwierdzenie, o którym była mowa, że jest niezdefiniowane, i ono nie znajduje się do tej pory w dokumencie pekińskim, z trudem wynegocjowanym. Była ogólna zgoda prawie 190 krajów, które brały udział w tych wszystkich przygotowaniach do konferencji, że nie może być poszerzania dokumentu pekińskiego o żadne nowe sformułowania. To była sprawa czysto techniczna, nie było żadnej dyskusji na tematy związane z definiowaniem tych sformułowań.

I a propos jeszcze tych informacji i pytań, które dotyczą obecności mężczyzn na takich spotkaniach, muszę

powiedzieć, że całe prezydium tejże konferencji i osoba prowadząca to byli mężczyźni. Całą konferencję prowadził mężczyzna i wszyscy zasiadający w prezydium to byli mężczyźni. Muszę powiedzieć, że po tych różnych przykrościach, które polską delegację spotkały - niezaskuszenie - otrzymaliśmy informację od parlamentarzystów Unii Europejskiej, że szefem polskiej delegacji był naprawdę prawdziwy mężczyzna. (Oklaski)

Takie opinie dotarły do nas od parlamentarzystów Unii Europejskiej, ta korespondencja w dalszym ciągu do nas napływa i napływa korespondencja do pana premiera. To, myślę, tyle tytułem wyjaśnień. Dziękuję bardzo. (Oklaski)

(Przewodnictwo w obradach obejmuje wicemarszałek Sejmu Franciszek Jerzy Stefaniuk)

Wicemarszałek Franciszek Jerzy Stefaniuk: Dziękuję pani minister.

Ja też się nie wstydzę, że jestem mężczyzną. (Wesołość na sali, oklaski)

Czas przeznaczony na pytania w sprawach bieżących został wyczerpany. Sejm kończy więc rozpatrywanie tego punktu porządku dziennego. Niestety, według regulaminu czas został przekroczony o 15 minut.

(Poseł Wojciech Nowaczyk: Odpowiedzi nie otrzymaliśmy.)

Nic nie poradzę.

Pani minister coś chciała dodać? Proszę bardzo.

Maria Smereczyńska: Panu posłowi Kasprzykowi chcę odpowiedzieć, że sytuacja powiatowych centrów pomocy rodzinie nie była przedmiotem dyskusji na tej konferencji, myślę więc, że przy innej okazji na ten temat można porozmawiać. Owszem są takie doniesienia, że to już w tej chwili zaczęło funkcjonować. Dziękuję.

Wicemarszałek Franciszek Jerzy Stefaniuk: Dziękuję bardzo.
(Głos z sali: Strona internetowa...)

Maria Smereczyńska: Strona internetowa - rzeczywiście na stronie internetowej znalazł się błąd, popełniony przez pracowników Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych. Zostało złożone przez przewodniczącego polskiej delegacji pismo z prośbą o sprostowanie tego i już dzisiaj ta strona internetowa jest poprawiona i zapisy są prawidłowe, tak że nie ma tam już w tej chwili błędu.

Wicemarszałek Franciszek Jerzy Stefaniuk: Nie mogę dopuścić do dalszej dyskusji. Zakończyłem ten punkt, muszę się trzymać regulaminu. (Oklaski)